

The Light of the World:

A most True Relation of a

PILGRIMESS,

M. Antonia Bourignon,

Travelling towards ETERNITY.

Published by

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Divided into Three PARTS.

Which deserve to be Read, Understood and Consider'd by all who desire to be Sav'd.

Written Originally in *French*, and faithfully Translated into *English*.

To which is added,

A Preface to the English READER.

LONDON: Printed in the Year 1696.

ISAIAH ix. 2.

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great
light : They that dwell in the land of the shadow
of death, upon them hath the light shined.*

TO THE ENGLISH READER,

Of whatsoever

Party or Perswasion.

THE Degeneracy of the Christian World in all its Sects and Parties, from the *true Spirit of Christianity* and the primitive Institution of Jesus Christ, is the general observation of all Men; and the Regret of those who are truly sober and serious. And as the Corruption of the best things is always the most vile and abominable, witness Devils and Men; so that of the Christians is a By-word and a Scandal among the Jews, Turks and Heathens; and they may rise up in Judgment at the last Day, and condemn us, we being sunk farther below the common Principles of Human Nature, as well as Religion, than themselves. The Moral Vertues of Justice, Temperance, &c. are banished farther from the Minds and Conversation of Christians, than they are from among the Turks and Heathens; and we are so far removed from the Spirit, Life, and Doctrine of Jesus Christ, that ours may be truly term'd *Antichristian*.

He denied himself in all things; and we deny our selves in nothing: He never did his own Will, but the Will of Him that sent him; and we ever do our own, and not the Will of God: He was perfectly dead to the Honours and Riches, and Pleasures, and Learning of this World; and we only live to them: He had a toilsom and laborious Life, far from Ease, and full of Crosses, of Contempt, Reproaches, and Contradictions from Men; and we still

seek our Ease where we can have it, will force others to bear the Cross rather than take it up our selves, and would rather be contemned by God, than even for Righteousness sake endure Reproaches and Contempt from Men: He was meek and lowly in Heart, and with great meekness suffer'd the Contradiction of Men; and Pride and Haughtiness is the Spirit we are acted by, even when we most disclaim it, and we cannot bear with Contradictions from any without inward Repentment and Displeasure: Whatever he did was always accompanied with Righteousness, and Goodness, and Truth; and whatever we do has one or all of the contrary Qualities, Injustice, Malice or Hypocrisy: In short, Charity was the living Principle of his Heart and Life, and all his Actions were continual Streamings and Effects of the Love of God and of all Men; and Self-love, even to a Contempt of God and Hatred of Men, when they shock us in any thing, is the secret Spring by which we are always acted. The Lives of Christians are as flat a Contradiction to his Commands as to his Life and Spirit: He bids us *seek the lowest Place*; and we are never at rest, but climb as high as others will let us: He bids us, *take the Beam out of our own Eyes*, and we are still spying the Motes in our Neighbours: He would *not have us lay up for our selves Treasures upon Earth*; and all our Care is about earthly things: He would have us, *seek first the Kingdom of God and the Righteousness thereof*; and that is the last and least of our Endeavours, except in Word only: He bids us, *deny our selves and take up our Cross daily*; and in every thing we seek our selves, and rather than take up the Cross, will stick at no Injustice to avoid it: He commands us *to love one another*; and for a Trifle we bite and devour one another.

Now one would think strange how the Professors of Christianity can reconcile their Practice with the Hopes of Heaven, while their Lives are so contrary to the Gospel. But, as the comparing the Lives and Temper of the Christian World at present, with the Life and Doctrin of Jesus Christ, does plainly shew their Contrariety to his: So if we shall enquire into the several sorts of Corruption and Degeneracy of the Age wherein he lived, recorded in the Gospel, and which he did chiefly set himself against, and upon what Grounds they nevertheless did presume of God's Favour, and of being his Children, and shall compare them with ours; we still find the same Leaven spreads still; and

and tho we have other Names, yet we have still the same Corruptions and the same Spirit. It is not in one Age or one party that these Corruptions do prevail, but more or less in all Ages and among all Parties; and tho' Names and Faces change, yet in every Age Men's Natures and Dispositions are for the main the same. It was not needful therefore that Jesus Christ should appear in every Age to make known their Vices and Corruptions; the Reproof of the Age wherein he liv'd, is the Reproof of all, and what he said to the several Sects among the Jews, he says to us, and we may read our Faults and Judgment in theirs.

There are three sorts of Persons especially spoken of in the Gospel, *the Publicans and Sinners, the Sadducees, and the Scribes and Pharisees.* The first were gross and scandalous sinners, known for such by all, their Company avoided for that Reason, and they self-condemn'd, as acting against the Light and Checks of their own Consciences. The second were the Wits and Sparks, and mighty Men of Reason of that Age. They could not believe a Resurrection, nor the being of Angels and Spirits, these seem'd not consistent with their Reason, nor with the Ideas they had of this present World, and therefore they deny'd them; even as if blind Men should deny the being of Light and Colours, because they cannot feel them with their Hands, nor touch them as they do other Bodies, with the End of their Staff. The third were the most Religious People of the Age, wherein they liv'd; they were had in great Veneration by all; they were not guilty of the scandalous Vices of the Publicans, they abhor'd them so much that *they would not eat with them*; they read and studied the Scriptures much; they were much in Devotion, and made long Prayers, they were exact Observers of the Sabbath-day, would reprove a Man that came to be heal'd, or that pluck'd an Ear of Corn on it; they were very exact and scrupulous in little things, so afraid of breaking the Command of Paying Tithes of all their Increase, that they would not omit even their Mint, Anise and Cummin: But, in the mean time they despis'd the weighty Matters of the Law, Righteousness, Mercy and the Love of God; they were Proud, and covetous, and worldly-minded; they did all to be seen of Men; they sought the Praise of Men more than that of God; they devour'd Widows Houses, but had still a Religious Pretence for it; they would learn People to despise their Parents; but

it was on the account of *Corban*; they would hate and persecute others even to Death, but it was to do God Service; they were mighty zealous to propagate their Religion, and would compass Sea and Land to gain Proselytes, but then our Saviour tells us, *They were twofold more the Child of the Devil than themselves.*

Now, it is observable, That our Saviour's Reproofs are levell'd mostly against these two last sort of Persons: The former he treats with such Pity and Compassion, that his Enemies tax him for a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners.* He tells them, *There is joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repents, more than ninety and nine just Persons, that need no Repentance:* And that he came not to call the Righteous but Sinners to Repentance. But for the other two, he warns his Disciples to beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. He calls them a Generation of Vipers, whitened Sepulchres, fair and beautiful without, but within full of Corruption and Rottenness; he terms them the Children of the Devil, and asks, *How they can escape the Damnation of Hell?* To judge according to Appearance one would think they deserv'd a milder Treatment, and that the other ought to have been most last; and this is the Course and Practice of the World: But that which seems Righteous before Men is an Abomination in the Sight of God.

Our Saviour's Conduct in this, we may be sure, was the effect of Divine Equity and Wisdom. The *Publicans* and *Sinners* were not only look'd on as such by all others, but also were self-condemn'd; they knew they were doing what they ought not to have done, their Conscience could not but often smite them, and the Divine Grace exciting them, and outward Afflictions chastising them might one time or other bring them to Repentance; and the Sense of the greatness of their Sins might awaken in them an answerable Sense of the Divine Goodness; so that where Sin had abounded Grace should so much the more abound, and they who saw there was so much forgiven them, would love much. But the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* were not so capable of Conviction; their Sores were skin'd over with a fair Shew of Reason and Religion; their Sins were mostly Spiritual; they had no Remorse for them; the World and they themselves did approve them in what they did; they thought they were doing God Service; and they had form'd to themselves such a Righteousness of their own as made it next to impossible to bring them to Repen-

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tance; or to seek after the Righteousness of God by Faith.

There was no such Hazard that sincere and well-meaning Persons should be seduc'd by open and scandalous Sinners. Their gross Sins and the ill Character they went under, were as Beacons to warn others to beware of them. But it was not so easie to avoid the *Leaven* of one of the other *two*; they compass'd Sea and Land to gain Profelytes; and the specious Reasons of the one, and the seeming Piety, Zeal and Devotion of the other, with such a plausible Representation of Religion, as might encourage them to hope for Heaven, tho' they lov'd the World and follow'd their own Wills here, were Snares which it was not easie to escape.

Publicans and *Sinners* were more capable of receiving the Truth, they were convinced of all; and even when they were not resolv'd to follow it, yet the inward Conviction of their Consciences would keep them from maligning or persecuting the Publishers of it: But the other two resisted it with all their Force, stuck at nothing that might suppress it, did calumniate and defame it; persecuted its Author and Followers to the Death, and thought that in all they did God Service.

Jesus Christ then foreseeing the Effects of the Malice, and Subtilty of the Devil, how forward he would be to slip into his Church, to profess himself his Disciple, and pervert his Design and Doctrin, under Colour of owning and promoting it; and knowing well the Corruption of Men's Hearts, how naturally the Love of themselves and of the World would make them take up with Shadows of Religion, instead of the Life and Substance of it; he takes Care not only to shew them plainly by his Life and Doctrin, wherein it truly consists; viz. in true **CHARITY** as its End, and in a constant denial of our selves, as to our own Wills, and as to the Honours, Riches and Pleasures of this World, as the effectual and necessary Means of attaining to this End: But he also lets them see the false Religion that Self-love takes up with, and the main Branches into which it divides itself, in the different Pictures of the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, the one making an Idol of their corrupt Reason, and worshipping it for their God; and the other *teaching for Doctrins the Commandments of Men*, making the *Commandments of God* of none effect, either through their own Glosses, or the

Traditions of their Elders, being more zealous for these than the plain and simple Word of God; and both of them establishing a Righteousness of their own, a Righteousness founded on Self-love, Self-will, and the Love of Temporal Things, and making void the Righteousness of God, being void of Charity, and the Love of things Eternal.

And that the Disciples of Jesus Christ had need of such Warnings, the fatal Experience of all following Ages has but too evidently testified; and, as it seems in our Saviour's Days, in the last Age of the Jewish State, these Corruptions among them were come to their height; so in this last Age of the degenerate Christian State, this twofold Leaven seems to have spread through all Parties, and leaven'd the whole Lump.

The World is now full of those who set up for great Masters of Reason, and measure every divine Truth by Mathematical Principles and Demonstrations, and what will not bear that Test is ridicul'd by them, and tho' a Truth be never so plainly reveal'd in the Holy Scriptures, yet if it do not suit their way of Reasoning, and if they think it lies fair to be pelted by their Witticisms, they are sure to treat it in Derision, and to start Questions about it, as their Predecessors did to our Saviour about the Resurrection, of the Woman who had been married to seven Husbands, that were Brethren, *viz. Whose Wife she should be of the seven at the Resurrection?* And tho' they meet daily with as inexplicable Difficulties in the visible World, in Bodies, the being of which they cannot deny; and if they had liv'd all their Days in an Island among People where the manner of the Propagation of Men and Beasts was never heard of, when they had been told of it, would have thought it as ridiculous and impossible a thing as any Truth deliver'd in the Holy Scriptures; and tho' they have liv'd to see the Principles of the greatest Philosophers, who thought they establish'd all things by unerring Rules of *Æquations*, hiss'd out of Doors; yet this will not keep them from making Idols of their own Ideas, and worshipping their own Reason, and Christ and his Sacred Doctrin must be despis'd if he will not fall down before it and worship it: And how strangely this Spirit spreads now in the World, he that runs may read.

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There is no Delusion more dangerous, and which leads to more irrecoverable Blindness than this of making our wretched Reason and the Ideas it forms to it self the Measure and Standard of Truth. The Eyes of our Mind are like those of our Body, we may turn them to any Side we please, but can discern nothing aright, unless the Light shine upon them, and let them see the Objects round about them. So our Minds may form to themselves many Ideas and Imaginations, but none of them conformable to the nature of things, without a suitable Light to discover and direct them. In the Material and visible World, from the general Notions of Matter and Motion, and the Combination of variously mov'd, and figur'd Bodies, Men form to themselves such and such Systems of the Universe; which they strongly fancy to be the true Model of it; but when we come to consider more nearly the things themselves, we find them as far different as Light is from Darkness. Our Minds must receive due and suitable Impressions from the Objects themselves, else they can have no right Sentiment of them. A blind Man can never conceive aright what Light and Colours, the Sun and this visible World are, unless his Eyes be open'd and he receive the Light. The Light surrounds him, and he comprehends it not; we may by many Words and Similitudes give him general and dark Notions of the Excellency of Light and Colours, and the Beauty of this visible World; but one Glance of the Light it self will discover more to him than a thousand Descriptions made by us. It is the same of Divine and Spiritual Things. The Natural Man perceives not the Things of God, but they are foolishness to him. No Man knows the Things of God, but by the Spirit of God. A Divine Light and Illumination is necessary to make us understand and relish Divine Things. And if we think to comprehend and judge of them by our Reason and Natural Ideas, we do as foolishly and unreasonably as a blind Man that would judge of Light and Colours, by the Ideas he has gathered from his Touch and other Senses. And as the seeing and enjoying the Light, and the receiving the other Impressions of this visible World are quite another thing than the Ideas we retain and form of these things to our selves in the Light's absence; for these notional Ideas can never enliven, and warm, and cheer our Bodies, and make us enjoy all this visible World, as the other does, no more than the Picture of the Sun can give
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us Light and Heat, as the Sun himself does (for these are but the Pictures of the Things themselves) : So the true Light and Impression of Divine Things upon the Mind is as far beyond the notional Ideas that we may form of them (even tho' they were the true Pictures of them ;) and as a blind Man ought to submit to the Judgment and Conduct of those who enjoy the Light, and of whose Sincerity he has no reason to doubt, and in the mean Time to strive, if possible, to enjoy himself ; so ought we to submit our Understanding and our Will to the Divine Revelation of the Will of God made to others, and by them declar'd to us, and in the mean time so to yield up our selves to God as that the Eyes of our Understanding being enlightned we may come to comprehend what the good and acceptable, and perfect Will of God is.

But the *Leaven of the Pharisees* has yet more universally overspread Christendom than that of the *Sadducees*. Upon this is founded the Difference of the several Sects and Parties that are in the Christian World, and the Hatred and Animosity wherewith they prosecute one another, one crying, Lo here is Christ; another, Lo he is there. The same *Leaven* runs through all Parties, tho' it put on different outward Forms, according to the different Interests and Engagements of the respective Parties. Some are very zealous for particular Doctrins and Opinions which are uncertain as to their Truth, and of no Necessity for Salvation : Some set up for particular Forms and Rites of Worship, which may be either us'd or let alone, without hazard of Salvation : And others are as zealously bent against them. Some for such and such Forms of Discipline and Government, and others for overturning them. And tho' most of the Things, for or against which they bend all their Zeal, be of little Moment either for Promoting or Hindrance of Salvation ; yet they seem to lay the whole Stress of Religion upon them ; and having drawn them up into positive or negative Confessions of Faith, Creeds, Articles, Canons of Councils, and Acts of General Assemblies, they baptize them into the Sacred Names of *The Truths of God, the Cause of Jesus Christ, the Interest of his Church, the setting the Crown upon Christ's Head* ; they teach for Doctrins the Commandments of Men, and are more zealous for their Forms and Systems of Doctrins, drawn up by themselves or their Predecessors, than for the Simplicity and Plainness of the Holy Scriptures ; and tho' a Man embrace

embrace from his Herrt the Divine Writings, and endeavour to square his Life by the Rules set down in them; yet if he do not receive their Systems, and be not zealous for or against such outward Forms and Rites-as they embrace or dislike, he is to them as a Heathen and a Publican. And while they have a Zeal for the outside of Religion, they neglect Righteousness, Mercy and the Love of God; while they avoid the Scandalous and Carnal Vices that would make them hateful in the World, their Hearts are full of the Spiritual ones, which are as hateful to God. In short, the Apostle gives us a plain Character of them, 2 Tim. 3. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. warning us, *That in the last days perilous Times shall come; for Men shall be Lovers of their own selves, covetous, proud, boasters, blasphemers, disobedient to Parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural Affection, Truce-Breakers, false Accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, trayterous, heady, high-minded, lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God, having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof.*

It is strange to see how wilfully Men mistake the Nature of Christianity, and place it in that which it does not consist, and what it truly is they despise and trample upon. Christianity may be either consider'd in its End, or in the Means it directs us to, for the attainment of that End. Its End is CHARITY, to love God with all our Heart and our Neighbour as our selves. To love God is to love his Nature, his Righteousness, his Goodness, his Truth, and to be transform'd into the same Image; to love him with all our Hearts is to love him only for himself, and all other things only in and for God, and entirely to depend upon him. To love our Neighbours as our selves is to love them as his Images, as being capable to be transform'd into his Nature, and to endeavour to bring them, with our selves, to the Love and Enjoyment of God. This is the Essence of Religion, and the indispensable Duty that God requires of Man in all Estates, whether that of Innocence, or of his Reparation since his Fall; and as our Saviour tells us, *Matth. 22. 40. On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* Had man continued in the Integrity in which he was created, no other Duty had been requir'd of him. But he turning away his Love from God, and setting it on himself, and on the Creatures, making himself his last End, and the Creatures his chief Happiness, Means are propos'd to Man to bring him back to the Love of

of God, and to remove the Hindrances of it; and he having forfeited the Friendship and Love of God, Hopes are given him of Recovering his Love and Favour; for obtaining of which the Intercession of a Mediator was needful, who by his Merits and Favour with God might obtain it; and the main Hindrances of the Love of God being Self-love, and the Love of the Creatures, he is directed to the Use of such Means as may effectually mortifie and subdue these in him; and Man being a wayward Patient, unwilling to take the Physick provided for him, as being bitter and unpleasant; the Physician takes Man's Nature on him, and takes the Remedies first himself, flies the Ease, the Honours, the Riches, the Pleasures, and the Sciences of this World, embraces Poverty, Reproaches, Troubles and Pains, and denies himself and his own Will in every thing, that he might do the Will of him that sent him. So the essentially necessary and effectual means to recover the Love of God, is Faith in God through Jesus Christ, with unfeign'd Repentance, a constant denial of our selves, and forsaking of every thing that hinders us to love God; and for this End the taking up our Cross daily, and following of Christ. The Holy Scriptures are the Sacred Records wherein God's Love to Mankind, the Life and Doctrin of Jesus Christ, and the Precepts he has given for the mortifying of our corrupt Nature, and returning to the Love of God, are plainly manifested to us; and, in this respect they are necessary to make us wise unto Salvation, as the written Counsels of a Physician, would be for the Recovery of his Patient's Health. Sermons, religious Offices, Sacraments, sacred Assemblies, Pastors, Church-Government, &c. are more remote means for bringing Men to Salvation, and, if rightly us'd may be very helpful to direct them in the Practice of the necessary and effectual means for returning to an entire Dependance upon God: But if the first be wholly neglected, and these be rested on, and if we think we are religious because zealous about these things, and in the mean time are still Lovers of our own selves, self-will'd, self-conceited, worldly-minded, envious, malicious, our Actions void of Righteousness, Goodness, Truth, &c. our Religion is the Leaven of the Pharisees, it is but a Form of Godliness, we are alienated from the Life of God, it is a Righteousness of our own, and we are as mad and foolish as sick Men would be, who should run about among Apothecaries and Surgeons, and be

be very greedy to hear the Receipts of Cures for their Maladies, dayly read and explain'd to them, should fight and quarrel, and hate, and destroy one another, in contending which were the best Explanations of the Receipts, and which Company of Apothecaries and Surgeons, had the best Form of Government ; and, in the mean time, both Directors and Patients were sick unto Death, yet neither would apply themselves to take those Remedies which by all were granted to be necessary and effectual for their Recovery, and without which they must inevitably perish.

Now the Writings of the Author of this following Treatise, containing such bright Illustrations of the Truths of God, reveal'd in the Holy Scriptures, and discovering so plainly in what manner they are perverted by the false Glosses of the Professors of Christianity in their respective Parties, I hope it will be no ill service done to the Christian Religion, and to this Island in particular, to make them more generally known to this part of the World ; of which Design this is an Essay.

The Author was a Virgin call'd *Antonia Bourignon*, born in the Town of *Lisse*, in *Flanders*, in the Year 1616. the Daughter of a rich Man there, and Baptiz'd and Bred up by her Parents in the Communion of the Church of *Rome*. Being taught to read in her Childhood, and having read the Gospels, and being told of the Life of Jesus Christ, how poor, and mean, and despis'd, and self-denied he was, and seeing all People live very unlike to him, in Ease and abundance, and Pleasures, and Honours, she ask'd her Parents, *Where are the Christians? Let us go to the Country where the Christians live?* And tho' her Parents derided her for this, yet this Impression ever remain'd with her ; and it was her constant Theme to let the World see what a true Christian is, and that none such are to be found.

From her very Childhood she had inward Conversation with God, and gave her self to Prayer and Divine Retirement ; but this Retirement being look'd on, by the Suggestions of her elder Sister, to her Companions, as the effect of Stupidity and Sottishness, and she despis'd therefore, to avoid this, she applied her self to take part in their Recreations and Divertisements, and she quickly gain'd

gain'd their Esteem and Favour above her Sister, but lost her Conversation with God.

Yet he did not cease now and then to awaken her, even in the midst of her Divertisements; but Company and these Amusements still got the Ascendent. Then God tried her with more severe means, filling her Mind with fearful Ideas of Death, Judgment and Hell, whereby she came to her self again, and saw the Vanity of all earthly things, which would end at Death, and leave the Soul empty of true Good, and full of real Evils. This made her abhor her present Life, all worldly Advantages, the Body, and the Caring for it. And because the Sollicitations of earthly things were apt to return again, she took Care to have this deeply engraven upon her Spirit; she went oft to Charnel-houses, to view the Bones of the Dead, saying, *See what thou art within a little while? thou shalt be like this, and yet more horrible.* She handled them to overcome her natural Horror for them, and to make the Thoughts of Death familiar to her. For six Months she begg'd no other thing of God but the Remembrance of Death, and obtain'd it. It was about the fifteenth or sixteenth Year of her Age that these Combats began with her, and towards the eighteenth that she came to a full Resolution of yielding up her Will wholly to God, and of abandoning the World.

For seven Years after the Tears and Sorrows of her Penitence did continue, which she accompanied with great Austerity and Mortification, wearing a Shirt of Horse-hair next her Body Night and Day, sleeping only on a Deal-board, and that no longer than three Hours each Night, passing the rest on her Knees in Prayers, giving the Sheets of her Bed and her other Linnen to the Poor, and still bringing them back to be wash'd with those of the Family, without the Knowledge of the Servants. She eat no more than what might preserve her Life, and would mingle Earth and Ashes with what she did eat, to avoid the Pleasure that might tempt her. Her Penitence and Mortifications were not the effects of a Melancholy Humor, nor did they produce it, she being of a most chearful Disposition, even till Death. But she punish'd herself, with an inward Contentment, out of a Principle of Justice, being convinc'd there was nothing more just, than to regrave the Sin of having ceas'd to love so lovely a God. God has no need of our Mortifications, but our Flesh and Corruption have great

great need of them. *Timothy* was so sensible of this, that he stood in need of a Caution from the Apostle *Paul*, to look also to his Health. No doubt there may sometimes be Excess in these Mortifications, of which *M. Bourignon* was so sensible, that she could never advise any Body in this to follow her Example, but to resign themselves to God, and to take up chearfully the daily Crosses and Mortifications which his Providence shall appoint for them. This so few are unwilling to do, that undoubtedly God loves more the readiness of those who mortifie themselves too much, than the Sloth of those who do it too little, or not at all. She would have continued this Austerity still, if at the Age of twenty five Years God had not commanded her to leave off all this, and to lead an ordinary Life.

When she remembred how she had lost God, whom formerly she enjoy'd; she would pass whole Nights in crying out, *My God! my God! where art thou? my God! what shall I do? what must I do to find thee again? what wouldst thou have me to do to be well-pleasing in thy Sight? what shall I do to fulfil thy Will?* After much Time, many Prayers, Watchings and Tears, God was pleas'd inwardly to manifest himself to her anew. And the first Answer she receiv'd to the Petition she had so often made, was this Divine Doctrin, which contains the whole substance of the Gospel: *Forsake all Earthly Things: Free thy self from the Love of the Creatures: Deny thy self.* This was about the twentieth Year of her Age. These were the Words which stuck ever with her, and upon these she laid the Foundations of a Christian Life.

She forsook all earthly things for the Love of God, and to give her self wholly to him, and yielded up her self entirely to his Conduct, doing nothing without his Direction. She thought to have met with true Christians in the Monasteries, and was resolv'd to have shut up her self into one of them: But there she found them as full of the Love of the World, and of Self-love, as elsewhere. God made known to her, That the Society of Christians, which she had been seeking for in vain, was to be re-establisht in the World by her means. This seem'd impossible to her, because of her Sex, her Weakness, her Ignorance, her Meanness, and having never read nor been taught by any what the Gospel-Life was. And having laid this before God, she had this Answer. *Behold these Trees in the Church-yard; they seem dry Wood, without Leaves or Fruit, or any Appearance;*

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rance ; nevertheless, when the Season comes, they shall bring forth Leaves, Flowers and in abundance, without any Body's touching them : So shall it be of my Work. The manner how she was train'd up by God for this is remarkable. That she might acquire Divine Light, she was not sent to Study, nor Reading, nor Speculations, nor to fill her Head with the Knowledge of Spiritual Things : But she resign'd herself in Simplicity to God, avoiding Sin, needless Distractions, and the Activity of her own Reason ; without desiring to know more than what was needful for her to know in the moment in which she was, referring all the rest to God, who gave her Knowledge and Light according to the Occasions wherein she needed them, whether for her own Conduct, or that of others, for the Discovery of Truth, or the Refutation of Error.

When she had learn'd from God his Designs in general, she did not immediately, with haste and precipitation set about the Execution of them, as many rash Persons would have done with much Zeal : She had still this Rule, That it was not enough that God inspir'd good Designs, but we must also wait upon him till he open the Way, and direct all our Steps in the Execution of them ; that the Spirit of God acts leisurely, yea slowly, but steadily, and what he produces in so leisurely and imperceptible a manner, has afterwards a lasting and solid Subsistence : Whereas the Spirit of the Devil moves all at first, makes a great Noise and a great deal ado, but in process of time all slackens and vanishes into Smoak and Nothing. She mov'd always by this Rule.

She made several Attempts to bring others to lead a truly Christian Life ; Some Nuns were inclin'd to follow her Directions ; some Bishops and Priests were convinc'd of the total Degeneracy of Christendom, and that the Spring of all the Corruption was in the Clergy ; but Human Respects and Worldly Considerations kept them from prosecuting what their Inward Convictions prompted them to. She was prevail'd with to take the Charge of an Hospital of young Maids, and to educate them in the Fear of God, and the Spirit of the Gospel : But after nine Years Labour, tho' to outward Appearance they seem'd most modest and verruous, yet, to her great Grief, she found them in Heart to be led captive by the Devil, at his Will. She was afterwards mov'd by God to set down in Writing the Divine Truths communicated to her ;

her; and having ask'd of God, If she should keep these Writings secret or publish them? He said to her, *Yes, publish them; for by them the Gospel shall be preach'd thro' all the World.*

The writing of this Treatise, *The Light of the World*, was occasion'd by M. Christian de Cort, Superior of the Fathers of the Oratory at Mechlin in Flanders, a Man full of Zeal for God and Charity for his Neighbour, and void of self-seeking. He no sooner discover'd that God had hid in her the Treasures of his Divine Wisdom, than he took all occasions to be instructed by her in the Truth; and when alone, set down in Writing the Sum of what had past in their Conversation, but this briefly and without Order. He acquainted her with his Resolution to publish this to the World, thinking himself oblig'd in Conscience to undeceive others, as by these Divine Truths he was undeceiv'd himself. But when she had seen his Papers, and read a little of them, she told him, they would be useful for himself, but not for others, because they often answer'd the Thoughts of his own Mind, which no Body perceiv'd but himself; and being sollicit'd by him to compose this Work anew, returning him his Papers, she her self wrote by way of Conference, the things which God brought into her Memory, in the same manner as they are now publish'd in the three parts of *The Light of the World*.

She went to Holland at the Sollicitation of M. de Cort, in order to the Printing of this Book. To this she had some Repugnance at first, having never been formerly in any Place without the Dependence of the Church of Rome, and being made believe that all the Hereticks, as they call'd them, were monstrous and Infectious. But having recommended this Affair to God, she was told, *That these common Differences of Religion do not bring Salvation, but the Love of God only and Vertue, which we ought to love in all Persons who aspire to it, without regarding the outward Religion they profess; that she ought to do good to all, and communicate to all the Light of the Divine Truth, of what Religion soever they be.* This wrought in her Soul so perfect an Impartiality, that she never afterwards enquir'd of what Religion one was, provided only he lov'd to put in practice the Doctrin of Jesus Christ, and to recover the Love of God.

This impartiality of Spirit, and her equal Concern for the good of all, and the Freedom she took to manifest the

Corruption of all Parties, and how far they were from the Spirit of true Christianity, made her to be hated and persecuted on all sides. The Jesuits, the Janfenists, the Lutheran and Calvinist Ministers, the Anabaptists, the Quakers, the Labadists, did respectively prosecute her, either with their Tongue or Pen, or by exciting the Civil Power, where she staid, or animating the Fury of the Rabble against her. They made her pass for a Visionarist, a Person of a wicked Life, suspected of Sorcery, a Blasphemer, the worst of Hereticks, one who did propagate the most damnable Opinions; but Wisdom is justified of her Children. The Innocence and Purity of her Life, and the perfect Conformity of it to the Christian Doctrin of her Writings was made appear by Evidences beyond all Exception. The publick Confession which she made of her Faith, and the Agreement of her Writings therewith shew the Falshood of their Calumnies as to her Doctrin; and the Writings publish'd against her gave her occasion the more to clear and manifest the Truth; so that what they were apt to except against in some of her Writings she more fully explain'd in others; as appears, for Instance, in her Advertisement against the Quakers, where she speaks more expressly of the Respect due to Pastors, and the Sacraments.

She deplor'd greatly the unhappy Schisms which have divided Christendom into so many Factions, disapprov'd all that favours of the Spirit of a Parry, of Disputes and Partialities; protested a thousand times against the establishing a new one, but aim'd to perswade all to observe the Doctrin of Jesus Christ, without changing from one parry to another; so that she even dissuaded some Protestants of her Acquaintance from turning over to the Church of Rome, as they had been solicited by others, but to obey the Doctrin of Jesus Christ in the Communion wherein they were, such Changes being but the effect of Vanity. She said, the Difference of Sects and Parties among Christians was founded upon their Neglect of the Essentials of Christianity, and their Zeal for some of the Accessories and Externals of it; and comparing the first to a Sword, and the other to its Sheath, the great Debate among the respective Parties was, which had the best Sheath, and in the mean time the Devil robb'd us of the Sword.

She was desirous to know the Will of God, even as to the ordering of outward things, and receiv'd from him the following Rules :

1. *Do all in good order, and in season ; for I am a God of order : And Disorder comes from the Devil, and from Sin.*
2. *Never be eager in Temporal Affairs ; but apply your mind to do well what you do, in quietness ; for the wandring of the mind, and disquiet spoils all.*
3. *Take care of making a good use of every thing, that nothing be spoil'd or lost ; for what is lost by your negligence, will be required of you ; and what you have no need of, may be useful for another.*
4. *Keep your self still employ'd in things useful, saving, or necessary. For idleness is the Mother of all Evils, and the Devil lodges in an idle Soul.*
5. *Labour, that you may accomplish your Penitence ; and not that you may please Men, or gain Money, or satise your self, for all the Labours that you go about for any other end than to please me, are lost Labour ; and you have your reward in what you sought for, whether it be complaisance of Men, or the Money you have gain'd, or your own satisfaction.*
6. *Apply your mind to look well to every thing, that nothing perish thro' your negligence ; and what you observe to be amiss, help it as soon as you can, by repairing as much as is possible for you all the faults that you have committed.*
7. *Do the same as to the good of your Neighbour, that you may fulfill that Command of loving your Neighbour as your self.*

They who were with her to whom she had recommended these Rules, being unwilling to be so exact in the smallest matters which while they were conversant in the World seem'd to them of no moment, and she having ask'd Counsel of God thereupon ; she had this Answer : *All that Men have to do in this World are but trifles and of little moment, and if they will not obey me in so small and easie matters, how will they do in great and difficult ones ? Not that I have need of them for my self ; nothing can profit or hurt me : But you have great need to observe exactly all these things that I teach you : For being made up of a Soul and Body, both which have need of entertainment, if you do not carefully order Temporal things, your Body will fall into a thousand sorts of Miseries, Anxieties, Maladies, Disquiets, Confusion, Poverty and Want : which at last will become unsupportable to you : And all this, because of your little foresight, your disorder-*

or negligence. Therefore I instruct you how you ought to carry on all things, even to the least of your Actions, that you may be happy even in this miserable Life. Not that I have need that you be Rich or Poor, in Health or Sickness, in good Order or in Confusion, neat or unclean outwardly: all this does not touch me nor offend me, so long as your Souls abide in my Love, and in the keeping of my Commandments. But the love I bear you, and the care I have for you, makes me give you these instructions for your own good.

But the full story of her Life is to be had in the Account of it written by her self, and the continuation of it by the R. P. P.

I know People will be possess'd with many prejudices, against the Writings of this Person. The plain representation which she gives of the Gospel Life and Spirit, and the contrariety of the lives of Christians thereunto, of the universal Corruption of all parties, and their taking up with the shadow instead of the substance of Religion, will provoke many to disparage and discredit them by all means; and the Craftsmen that live by those Silver Shrines, will stir up the multitude against them; and from the circumstances of her Person, and the singularity of some of her Sentiments they will take occasion to fill Peoples minds with prejudices, so as not once to allow her a fair hearing. I shall not offer to remove the particular exceptions which may be made against them. I shall only take the freedom to say something as to three or four general Prejudices, which are most obvious.

They are ready to except against her for pretending to Divine inspiration, and that the Doctrine she declareth is immediately and inwardly communicated to her by the Spirit of God. That God may immediately inspire Souls with his Divine Light and Truth, cannot be denied: That he has tied himself never to do it after the Apostle's days, and the Consignation of the Gospel in writiting cannot be made evident: That there are many false pretenders to Divine inspiration, and who thus highly take the name of God in vain, is but too evident, especially in the Age wherein we live: That we ought not to believe every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God or not. The Spirit of God has already warn'd us, that the surest Test wherby to try them is the conformity of the Doctrine with the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ (which is sufficiently confirmed already) and its tendency is to take

us off from all Earthly things and from our selves, and to bring us to God, and the entire correspondence of the Persons Life and Spirit therewith in all things, will I think be readily granted by many. Now *M.A.B.* desires to be put to this fair Tryal, if her Doctrin be not the same with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and if the constant tract of her Life and Spirit be not answerable thereunto, and the Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit (which he ever brings along with him wherever he resides) were not to be seen in her. It is just then to give her a fair hearing: And if you peruse her Writings impartially, it is like you will meet with many remarkable Characters that are not ordinarily to be found in many Writings. A clear and distinct account of the essential Truths of Christianity, with a constant urging of them as the one thing necessary, and distinguishing them from the accessory Truths which are not necessary to Salvation: An unimitable simplicity of expression, which a Child may understand with as singular a sublimity of thoughts; a convincing power and force going along with them; a plain unfolding in a few Lines the difficulties about which the Learned write many Volumes; a constant harmony and uniformity of sentiments in the Writings of a course of forty Years (from about the 23d to the 65th year of her Age in which she died;) with an evidence and clearness to the conviction of our natural Reason; and all this by one who never read any Books, never conversed with the Learned to be instructed by them, never premeditated what she wrote, never blotted out nor mended what was once written; but being attentive unto the love of God in the calm and inward recollection of her Spirit, wrote as fast as her hand could guide the Pen; and when some writings were laid by unfinished for some years, return'd to them and finish'd them after the same manner, without reading any more of what had been written than some few of the immediately foregoing Lines to make a due Connexion: And innumerable instances more. But above all the exact and constant purity of her Life, being a perfect pattern and living exemplar of the Spirit and Doctrin of the Gospel are things that deserve consideration. If there were a Race and Nation of People born blind, who had never seen the light, but knew their Houses, their Furniture, their Fields, &c. only by the touch. If some strangers should come in among them pretending to see the Light, they would not readily take it on their word, having no Idea of any such thing:

But if those strangers at their very first entry, should describe their Houses, (where they had never formerly been) their Dishes, their Seats, their Bulk, Places and Shape, and going out should tell them on a sudden the Neighbouring Hills, Vallies, Rivers and Villages, their situation and distances, which the Inhabitants themselves could not learn but by long use, and by going from place to place, and feeling them with their hands or staff; they would certainly be convinced that these were endued with some more ready and perfect faculty and mean of knowing all these things than ever they experienc'd. So for those who pretend to Divine Inspiration and to be led by the Spirit of God, and give no evidence for it but their bare assertion, indulging their corrupt Nature, and being as much Lovers of their own selves and of Earthly things as others, there is no reason to take it on their word, but rather to look on them as deceivers. But if any professing an inward illumination from God and a lively sense of Divine things, should despise the Ease, the Honours, the Wealth and Pleasures of this World, oppose constantly the desires of corrupt Nature, deny their own Will, mortify their outward senses, have their minds ever turned towards God, being always resign'd to his Will; and withall without Study, Reading, Learning or Meditation, should give a more clear, full, plain and consonant representation of Divine Truths even to the conviction of our natural reason, than we are able to do after much Study, Learning and Conversation; we have reason to think that such are endued with a more clear, effectual and enlightning sense and knowledge of the Divine Truths, than our notional knowledge can pretend to. It is by this Test that M. A. B. desires to be Tryed.

It being objected to her that since she declared only the Truths contain'd in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there was no need of any new Revelation of them, they being reveal'd already. To this she replyed that as the Law of God of old was so corrupted by the glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees that they had made the Commandments of God of no effect thereby, and therefore God was pleased to rescue his Law from their corruptions by the Divine Explanations of it in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; so the Doctrin of the Gospel is so corrupted by the glosses of men and these countenanc'd by the Learning and Wisdom of the World that men do not think themselves obliged to obey the Gospel according to the Letter, and therefore God has thought
fit

fit by the Divine simplicity of his Light thro' the Organ of a silly Maid to rescue it from their corrupt glosses and to confound their Learning even to their own Conviction.

They pretend to expose her also for advancing new Sentiments and Doctrins and thereby giving occasion to more Disputes and Controversies instead of lessening them. But never any did more abhor the Spirit of Dispute and Controversie than she; and her proposing of these particular sentiments are far from giving occasion to them; for as she makes a clear difference between the essential and the accessory Truths of Christianity, so she proposes these sentiments only as accessorie ones, which may be helpful to some to make them the more admire and love God and despise this present World, but not as necessary to be believ'd by all, and she has often said that People need not believe them, and that for this they will neither be more nor less pleasing to God; that they even ought to abstain from inquiring about them out of a Spirit of curiosity, for such inquiries would beget distraction, presumption and pride of heart; that they ought to study only Jesus Christ crucified, to imitate him, and to deny themselves without which the Devil and sin would mingle themselves in all their enquiries. And upon this head she refused often to explain her self upon these Subjects: Saying; *wherefore serves it to distract your selves unprofitably, to neglect the main thing? Endeavour to deny your selves and to imitate Jesus Christ, and you shall know one day what there is of these things; otherwise you shall deprive your selves of them and Damn your selves by your own curiosity and presumption. Speak no more to me of them; but hold to the one necessary, substantial and fundamental thing Jesus Christ Crucified, out of whom S. Paul would know nothing beside.* Besides it is very observable, that these sentiments are not only very agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, but do also explain a thousand passages of them and the whole System of the Works of God in such a clear manner as could not be hitherto comprehended.

Many are ready also to pick out some passages of her Writings which separately seem harsh, and from them take occasion to accuse her of Heterodoxy and of denying the essential mysteries of the Christian Faith, and particularly that of the sacred Trinity. There are no Writings which by this measure may not be represented as full of Heterodoxies.

This usage she protests against her self and desires they may not treat her Writings as they do the Sacred Scriptures, single out and expose some passages without comparing them with the whole tenour of the rest: And for the *mystery of the Sacred Trinity*, she not only declares her belief of it in express terms, owns it in her confession of Faith, but having us'd many similitudes to illustrate it as the Fathers and Schoolmen have done, she declares in the 24th. C. of the first Part of the *Light of the World*, that *this unspeakable, most real, most beautiful, most good, most great, most glorious mystery is above all that we can make or say of it, that nothing is able to express it, and that all that can be said of it, detracts from it instead of coming near it.*

What she says in the 2. Conf. of the 2. Part of the same Book, ought not to be understood, as if she despis'd Baptism in it self, or condemned the right use of Infant Baptism. She wrote so favourably and with so much respect of the Sacraments, that the Quakers thought her guilty of a Criminal excess, as it appears by the Apologetical Treatise she publish'd in Answer to their Accusations. But notwithstanding the high esteem she expressed for the right use of the Sacraments, she was no less zealous in condemning the abuse of them, especially when it appeared to be universal. And it is in my opinion a general and uncontroverted Rule that when ill-disposed Persons make use of the most sacred things out of a principle of Self-love to flatter and encrease their own and other Mens corruptions, their practice and proceedings in this case can only proceed from a Wicked and Deprav'd Spirit. Now in those places where M. Bourignon disapproves the Baptism of Infants before they have attained the use of their reason, and ascribes it to an ill principle, it appears manifestly from the Text it self, that she speaks only of the present use or rather abuse of it among wicked and ill-disposed Christians. She speaks plainly (p. 15. & 16.) of the Baptism of Infants, *whose Parents have not Faith themselves, and cannot teach them to follow the Doctrin of Jesus, since they themselves will not do it. On the contrary, they teach them to follow the World and its Poms; and that the Godfathers and Godmothers, never think more on what they have promis'd in the Childs name; far less do they acquaint him with it when he is grown up, to the end the Child may remember the promise which he made at Baptism.* She speaks of Christians in parade and not in effect, for they have no sooner renounc'd in Baptism the World
and

and its Poms, than they think of nothing but to follow and to love it. And nevertheless (p. 17.) when they are outwardly Baptiz'd, they believe they are sufficiently assur'd of their Salvation; and every body thinks himself a good Christian, if so be, he have been outwardly Baptiz'd. This is her true meaning in these passages, and it is with respect to those, who are in that state or disposition, and are habitually inclin'd to act after that manner, that she affirms it would be more expedient to put off Baptism till they be of Age and in a good disposition of mind, without which it would have been better for them that they had never been Baptiz'd. Agreeably to this, the Holy Scriptures intimate clearly, that it's the Devil who intices men to make use of the Sacraments, while they are in an ill disposition of mind, and that their haſt and precipitancy in this caſe proceeds from the inſtigat[i]on of Satan and is an abomination to God, as it appears by the 1. and 66. Chap. of the Prophet *Iſaiah*. St. *Peter* tells us plainly, that it was by the inſtigat[i]on of the Devil that *Simon Magus* deſir'd to be Baptiz'd, while he was in the bonds of iniquity. And when St. *Paul* ſays, that thoſe who receive the Lord's Supper unworthily, eat and drink their own condemnation, does he not clearly give us to underſtand, that it's the enemy of our Salvation who incites men to make a bad and raſh uſe of Sacred things, to the deſtruction of their Souls? M. *Bourignon* has made it appear in ſo many paſſages of her Works, that ſhe ſpeaks only againſt thoſe, who make uſe of the Sacraments while they continue and proceed in a corrupt ſtate, that it would be tedious to inſert in this place: See the 28, 29, 30 and 31. Numb. of the 1ſt p. of *Antichriſt Reveal'd*, and the 1ſt Letter of the 3 p. of the *Tomb of falſe Divinity*, where ſhe is ſo far from condemning true Chriſtians for Conſecrating their little Children to God in Baptiſm, that ſhe declares expreſſly that *Infant Baptiſm would be of good uſe, if Parents would take care to educate their Children in the true faith, and put them in mind after they are of Age, of the promiſe they made in their name at Baptiſm, namely that they ſhould be Chriſt's Diſciples, and renounce the Devil, the World, and all its Vanities*. And tho' ſhe believ'd (according to the opinion of ſeveral Learned Men) that adult Perſons were only Baptiz'd in the primitive Church, and preferr'd that cuſtom as being leſs ſubject to abuſes, yet ſhe did not think, that this rule or practice was then ſo generally receiv'd, but that it might admit of juſt exceptions. And therefore in an
other

other part of her Writings, after she has declar'd, speaking to an Anabaptist, *that we must not amuse our selves with disputing about the external forms of Baptism, while the Soul is not willing to die to the corruptions of the flesh, that it might live again to the Spirit of Jesus Christ.* She adds, *That since the Scripture informs us that in the days of the Apostles whole Families were Baptiz'd at once, it is probable that there were young Children as well as old Persons in them.* In short, These things may be done either out of a good or bad Principle; but usually, and at present generally, these things were done out of a bad Principle; and this is what she reproves and condemns with so much reason and justice.

As for that Question, whether we ought to condemn the Repetition of Baptism, when it was not duly perform'd at first. If that Repetition may serve to promote a true conversion to God and his love, it's plain it cannot be disapprov'd, but by a Spirit that prefers external things before God and his love, which cannot be ascrib'd to the Spirit of God. Thus the Scripture furnisheth us with instances of this Repetition of Baptism, when it may serve as a mean to receive the Spirit of God. See *Act. 19. 2, &c.*

Some will be apt to take up a prejudice against her, because in some places she speaks with some sharpness against the Protestants, the Reformation made by them, and the first Reformers. But they who consider with what severity she treats the Church of *Rome* in whose communion she was, looking on her as the great Whore that sits on many waters, how plainly she represents the corruption of all Parties, and how ready every side is to be wedded to the little interest of their respective Parties, will rather admire and love the Impartiality and Ingenuity of her Spirit than be prejudic'd against her upon that head. God dwells not in Temples made with mens hands, and the human and political constitutions of Churches, with their respective Acts, Articles, Covenants, and Schemes of Government have hitherto prov'd but the occasion of mutual hatred and contention, and not being Cemented with CHARITY, *of all these buildings one stone is not like to be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.* When the Temple was built, all the stones were hewn and squar'd in the Wilderness, and there was neither Hammer, nor Ax, nor any Tool of Iron heard in the House, while it was in Building. And that God may thus rear up the living Temple of his Church will be the prayer of all serious Persons.

But

But for a full satisfaction to the exceptions that may be made against her, I refer to her own Writings and to the Apologetical Preface written by the R. P. P. and prefix to her Life.

In the mean time as her Writings seem design'd for the common good of all Mankind, and for reviving the true Spirit of Christianity in the World, so I heartily wish they may be made universally useful, and that the communicating them to the World in their respective Languages may have its due effect. That the Heathen may see how by Nature they are alienated from the life of God, and how desirous God is that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth: That the *Mahomitans* may admire and embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whom they Honour for a great Prophet, and against whose Religion the greatest prejudice is the ill representation made of it by the Lives and Practices of those who profess it: That the Jews may be convinc'd that Jesus is the true Messiah whom they look for, who is to come again in Glory upon Earth, and who having kept them for so many Ages scatter'd among other Nations in a state of contempt and reproach, is thereby preparing them for a more exalted state when they shall be grafted in again, and made the head who are now the tail: That the Professors of Christianity may learn what it is indeed, and how far they are from it, and that their eyes being open they may see they are greater Idolaters than the Heathens, while these thro' ignorance and in the simplicity of their hearts bow their bodies before the Sun or their Idols; but those in the midst of light, with the bent of their hearts, their Love, their Affections, and endeavours do Worship Gold and Silver, and Meat and Drink, and Cloaths, and Men, and Honours, and their own Wills and Passions; that while they profess to abhor Idols they may cease to be the greatest Idolaters themselves: That the several parties of Christendom may be convinced that they have lost Christianity and are fighting for its shadow, and while its Essence is Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth, the Devil has shed among them his contrary Antichristian Qualities of Injustice, Malice, and Hypocrisy, under an outward cover of Masses, Prayers, Preachings, Communions, Sacraments, Sabbaths, Holy-Days, Fasts, &c. which when the essence of Christianity is gone, are an abomination unto God: That the Learned may learn not to be puff'd up with their knowledge and become so humble as to be willing to learn something

thing from a simple Maid, that perhaps may be of more use to them than all their Learning; and that they may be sensible that Divine Light and Knowledge does as far transcend their Notional Learning, as the enjoying and beholding the Sun, the Light, and all this visible World does the looking upon their Pictures: That her own Sex may admire the goodness of God, in chusing a Virgin for his Mother, and a Virgin to be the Organ of his Light and Spirit in this last Age of the World, that they may see they are capable of more excellent endowments than those in which the other Sects pretend to excel them, in which God seems to give them the preference to confound the Wisdom and the Learning of the World, that they may strive rather to be well pleasing to God than men, that fleeing all earthly loves which prove bitterness in the end, they may give their hearts wholly to him, who is altogether lovely, whose love is unchangeable, who will not disappoint them but will reward their Love with infinite Light, and Joy, and Love: That they who pretend to be led by the Spirit of God may beware of taking God's name in vain, and of vouching God's Spirit, for all their Dreams and Imaginations; for where the Spirit of God resides, there his fruits are, and the Soul that posses him has it's Affections wholly remov'd from Temporal and Earthly things, and set upon those which are Spiritual and Eternal: That the Pastors of the Church may see at whose Doors the Guilt of the universal Evils of Christendom are like mostly to be laid, that they may fear and tremble when they hear that Salt which has lost it's Savour is good for nothing, but to be cast out and troden under foot of Men; that by the grace of God they themselves may be taught true Humility, Self-denial, and a contempt of all Earthly things, without which Spirit they are no more capable of Teaching others, however they repeat the Words of Christ and his Apostles, than an Ape can make a good Picture, tho' he take up and use the Painters Pencils and Colours. In one Word, that all may be brought to deny themselves and to follow Jesus Christ in the true Love of God and of one another; and that the Judgments of God being now abroad upon the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World may learn Righteousness.

“ For a further Vindication of these Writings and the
 “ Sentiments contain'd in them; I shall here Subjoyn the
 “ protestation made by P. P. after his having Answered the
 “ Calumnies and Reproaches which some had publish'd a-
 “ gainst

“ gainst them, in the V. Sect. of *La paix des bonnes Ames*,
“ pag. 278, 279, 280.

“ But says he, if all that said does not satisfy, I will make,
“ and do at present make this PROTESTATION
“ before God and before all Men, that is,

“ That M. B. her Friends and I, never had, have not
“ yet, and shall never have, by the Grace of God other
“ Sentiments or Designs than to believe and live as true
“ Christians, professing by word and deed all that is Fun-
“ damental in true Christianity, and which is comprehend-
“ ed in the Apostles Creed.

“ That we receive the Holy Scriptures of the Old and
“ New Testament as Divine and Infallible, and reject all
“ that is contrary thereunto.

“ That we believe and adore the adorable and incom-
“ prehensible Trinity, the Father, the Word or the Son,
“ and the Holy Spirit, God three and one eternally Blessed,
“ the inward distinctions of which (by what name soever
“ they be call'd, Real, Relative, Hipostatical, Personal, Sub-
“ stantial) are as true, as they are truly incomprehensible by
“ the mind of Man.

“ That we hold Jesus Christ to be true Eternal God and
“ true Man, to be the Saviour and Redeemer of the
“ World, to be the Mediatour between God and Men,
“ who by his Merits, by his Satisfaction, by his Righte-
“ ousness, by his Life, and by his Death, is the Author of
“ Salvation to all those who imitate him, or to speak with
“ the Apostle, to all those who obey him.

“ That we ascribe the Glory of all Good purely to the
“ grace of God, and all Evil purely to the fault of Man and
“ of the Devil.

“ That we make the essence and perfection of true Chri-
“ tianity to consist in Self-denial, in continual Prayer, in
“ the Love of God, and of our Neighbour, and in the im-
“ itation of our Saviour.

“ That we consider all other speculations as accessory,
“ for which it is good not to condemn any body but to
“ leave every one at liberty to embrace or lay them aside
“ as they find them helpful for the advancement of the es-
“ sential part.

“ That the true Key whereby to come to the Knowledge
“ of Divine things is Humility and Prayer, and not the
“ forc'd speculations of Human Reason.

“ That

“ That all States, the Ecclesiastical, the Political, the
“ Oeconomical, are Establish'd by God, and that the Ho-
“ nour and Submission which is measured out to them and
“ regulated by the word of God is respectively due to them.

“ That when evil is reprov'd, this does not concern those
“ States directly, nor good men in them who are free of it,
“ but only the abuse and the ill behaviour of the wicked.

“ That if in the Writings of M. B. or of her Friends,
“ there be any thing that is obscure, or that seems contrary
“ to what has been said, we offer to clear and reconcile it, or
“ to disavow it, in case it cannot be made appear that it
“ cannot be well explain'd, and that it is not a mistake of
“ words.

“ We protest against all that may be cited from her writ-
“ ings or objected by way of consequence against what I
“ have said; as against so many shameful Manglings, Ma-
“ licious Interpretations, deceitful Calumnies, injurious
“ Consequences, in which God will do us Justice, if Men
“ are not just to us.

“ I protest also against all those who offer to pass hard
“ Censures upon what concerns M. B. her Friends or my
“ self, without having read the principal of her writings
“ or my system, as against unjust and unreasonable Judges,
“ at least as against Persons very inconsiderate and un-
“ worthy of Credit. In short, I believe I have reason to
“ require that they who shall be convinc'd to have laid to
“ our charge a hundred falsehoods, and others who shall be-
“ lieve them without reason, may not again be admitted,
“ the one in the Quality of Accusers, and the other in that
“ of Judges, but rejected, the one as notorious Impostours,
“ and the other as wilfully stupid.

An

A N
 ADMONITION
 TO THE
 READER.

Dear Reader,

Since 'tis my earnest desire that the perusal of this Divine Work, of which this is the first Part may be profitable and advantageous to you, I cannot forbear wishing that you may give no place in your mind to certain prejudices, with which the most part of the World suffer themselves to be so miserably deluded, that they would believe themselves deceived if they did not follow them. Permit me to speak to you a word or two of some of those pernicious and deceitful prejudices, which you must either banish out of your mind or forbear the reading of this Book, as you would not bring upon you your own Condemnation by retaining those things which may cause you to make an ill use of it.

In the first place I advise you not to regard the appearance, state, or quality of Persons, nor any thing that is purely external, and so consequently can neither add nor subtract from the Truth, which has no dependance on things of that Nature. Let the speaker be a Man or a Woman, let instructions come from this or that place, let the persons who are reproved be great or small, Turks or Christians, many or few; you must not be surpriz'd at any of these circumstances. Truth and Falshood may be found in either of these cases: And 'tis that only we ought to examine without regulating our judgments according to the differences we observe between the persons that speak

to us. For (a) in Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, Roman, or no Roman, Male nor Female. *It is here a Maid that speaks to you, none of those great Men who are so frequently reprov'd. Do not verify by your experience that saying of the Scripture, (b) When the rich and mighty speak, all hold their peace, and what he says they extol to the heavens; but when the mean man speaks, they say, who is this! even tho' he offer wise things they would not yield to him. If there be any valuable prejudice it should certainly be in favour of the meanest, weakest and most contemptible persons, since God himself has declared, 'tis his pleasure to make use of them, and Jesus Christ was so rejoiced at that choice, that he says to his Father, (c) I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and from the learned, and hast revealed them unto Babes; even so Father, since so it seem'd good unto thee! Is there any thing meaner, weaker and more contemptible in the esteem of the World, in the matters of Doctrin than a Maid? And can any thing be more proper to verify that declaration of the choice of God? He has also promis'd the pouring out of his Spirit in the last times upon Daughters (d) as one of the most signal marks of his power. And certainly the weakness of the instrument is an evident sign of him who employs it. It is plain that such an extraordinary effect must proceed from a cause, that is extraordinarily powerful; and that cause must be God himself, when the effect is good and useful,*

Secondly in Divine things you must have no regard to the natural qualities of the mind, or rather to the human means by which 'tis cultivated, such as Sciences, Study, Reading; and the like. Divine truth is so far from depending on such things, that 'tis rather obscur'd by them. It may be justly reckon'd a prodigy if such unnatural methods should be attended with success, when men endeavour to derive into ill prepared Vessels by the exercise of their corrupt faculties, things that are altogether independent upon them, and are freely infus'd by a calm insinuation into Souls that are at rest from their own tumults. Truly we might be astonish'd if the Learned should find solid truth by persuing such methods as would certainly banish it out of their minds if they were already possess'd of it. Man having

(a) Gal. 3. 28. (b) Eccl. 13. 28, 29, 30. (c) Matt. 11. 25, 26. (d) Joel. 2. 28.

lost, saith Solomon, (e) by much reasoning, the uprightness in which God created him. But when God speaks to us by simple and unlearned laiks, we cannot suspect them, as we would suspect the Learned, that they feed us with their studied speculations or the prejudices they have drunk in at Schools and drawn from the works of Men; and repeat to us the songs their Teachers have taught them to sing.

The Person who speaks here is without study, even without reading and which is more, without meditation: Search a little to find out the source of this fountain, and to understand well what Master could have instructed her; it could neither be Man, the Devil nor Nature.

But the thing which you ought most to observe, that you have no regard to the conduct of Men. I mean that you do not imagine that the Truth, much less Salvation depends upon them, their Opinions, Orders, Directions, Submission, or that it is tied to them by a necessary bond, since it has no essential union but with God alone, and may be forsaken by all men, if they will, as any man may, and too many actually do. This unhappy prejudice has ruined the Christian Church, who imagin'd that she could not possibly fall after she had establisht her self upon the authority of certain particular Persons, human Successions, outward Assemblies, and other Circumstances that are not at all inconsistent with the Spirit of Error. It is certain there are few Christians and even few Catholicks, who do not see that the Church is extreemly fallen away and corrupted. But the Learned have found out a distinction to charm this evil. They say, that tho' the Church may fall into a moral corruption and be guilty of back sliding from the practice of a Christian life, she is still infallible and incorruptible in matters of Faith. It is much to be feared, that this distinction serves rather to flatter the Spirit of pride than promote that of Humility, which is the Spirit of the Gospel, and that it proceeds rather from human interest, which prepossesses and darkens even the best minds, than from an enlightened charity which designs to excuse the evils of the Church as far as Truth permits. May not those who have made this distinction perceive they are so far from excusing the Church or lessening the guilt of her fall, that they render her guilty of the fall of Devils; whereas her Adversaries pretend only to hold her fallible after a manner conformable to human infirmity? It seems they contradict themselves

in this distraction, for can that which has no faith be incorruptible as to faith? and that which is not only destitute of the works of Faith, but whose works are corrupted and consequently opposite to those of Faith, can that have Faith? (f) Shew me, says the Apostle, Shew me the faith of which thou boastest without thy works, and I will shew thee the faith, which I possess by my works: Treating the Man as (g) vain and empty, who would give way to such thoughts: What then would he have said of those who maintain that one may be not only destitute of works, but that even his works may be evil, and habitually evil, or which is the same thing, that his Manners may be corrupted, and that nevertheless he might be infallibly possessed with the purity of the true Faith! But it may be they understand by Faith, Speculations, Notions, the knowledge of spiritual Things; but St. James reckons those things when they are alone and barren to be a diabolical Faith, since he expressly ascribes it (h) to the Devil. And how can this diminish or cover the evil of the Church, that tho' her Manners are corrupted, she has nevertheless with an infallible certainty the knowledge of Divine things, and the discerning of Truth and Falshood, of good and evil: This would be rather to make her fall equal to that of the Devil, to make her sin with knowledge in the midst of her light and against it.

Those who assert this Opinion, represent her without conscience, render her more odious to God and Men, more devilish, and condemn her to a place in Hell far below the Infidels, rather than if they should say, that her Morals are or have been Corrupted, for her being mistaken in her Knowledge, and believing that to be good and true which is not really so; since 'tis certainly a less evil, and a less fall to sin thro' ignorance and error, than to do it against the knowledge of the truth. To pretend to infallibility in the knowledge of the Truth, while at the same time it appears by her actions and her own confession that she is corrupted in the practice of a Christian life, would be to make a profession of sinning against the Holy Ghost, and renouncing of conscience; which St. Paul says, cannot be done without making shipwrack of the faith. (i) So that by this excuse they equally prove that she is fallen into a greater estrangement from God than that which they would excuse, and that at the same time she is destitute of true Faith

(f) Jam. 2. 18. (g) Jam. 2. 20. (h) Jam. 2. 19. (i) Tim. 1. 9.
and

and the knowledge of the Truth, and seiz'd with a malady of presumption, which puts me in mind of that for which St. Paul assures the Roman Church, in the Epistle which he wrote to her (k) that she shall be cut off, if she suffer her self to be led into it. In the mean time 'tis thro' this prejudice that they shut their Ears against the Truth that reproves them, and that they reject the remedies tho' they are not ignorant of their disease, putting themselves in a condition, that resembles the state of Babylon, of which the Prophet speaks, (l) we would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed; forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even unto the skie. Do not you likewise render your self incurable, dear Reader, by admitting of such prejudices, and suffering them to blind you so far as to make you reject the Heavenly remedies, which God offers you at present by the hand of a Maid without human instruction, and who reproves the abuses of that Society which they call the Church, how powerfully soever they are authoriz'd and favour'd by great Persons, to whom they are also favourable according to the interest of this World; which she does not out of a principle of partiality and private malice, as they are supposed to have done who have left the Church of Rome, since she never withdrew from it, and much less did she list her self into any other particular Sect, but disapprov'd them all, and discover'd their abuses in her other Writings with as much freedom as in this she has done those of the Roman Church, and in the general of all Christians.

This is one of her first Works, which she wrote at a time when she was not acquainted with those who differ in Opinion from the Roman Catholicks. The first part which is now communicated, was published some years ago in Dutch: Since I have had the happiness to see in Manuscript the other two Parts, which in my opinion are more admirable than this; I can indeed say, that I never met with more extraordinary, more convincing, edifying and moving Truths, than those which are in this Divine piece, particularly in the two following Parts and especially in the last, to incite us to resign our selves entirely to the guidance and direction of God. I cannot reflect upon the wonders I have seen in these Treatises, without crying out with amazement, what other Master than thou, O

(k) Rom. 9. 20, 21, 22. (l) Jer. 51. 9.

Holy and Adorable Spirit of my God, could be the Author of this most Divine Light! O most Holy and Almighty God, there is none but thee that could so powerfully draw thy Creatures to so holy and pure an end! And the first essays of such a Master by the weakest instruments are as perfect Master-pieces as the most finish'd works of others! for I can truly say, that I have felt as much and even more strength and moving force in these first works, than in her last productions. And I cannot comprehend how it is possible for any Man to resist such holy Truths, without declaring openly for the Devil, and undertaking the defence of Vice and Lying. There are none in my opinion but the Devil, and those who are resolv'd to be his slaves, and the protectors of Sin and Iniquity, that can hate or oppose this Light. For as for those who have still some remainders of good desires in their hearts whatsoever Errors they maintain, and with whatsoever vices they may be defiled, it is impossible for them to hate those Divine Truths, and much less the person by whom they are communicated to us, or raise persecution against her. Since they are so far from receiving an injury by them, that they have a far opportunity of delivering themselves from the most dangerous Evils and to embrace the advantage of a lasting felicity. There is a vast difference betwixt representing and doing Evil, betwixt admonishing one of his sickness and causing his distemper. Such a warning is rather a means to make him to look out for a remedy, and when at the same time the most proper remedies are presented to him, it is the highest obligation that can be laid upon him, especially in matters of eternal importance. And yet O blind and perverse World! it is your usual custom to wish evil to those who would deliver you from your misery, and to requite their Kindness with base and cruel persecutions, as it appears manifestly from the fate and experience of the true benefactors of Mankind, the Holy Prophet the Son of God himself, and all his beloved Disciples and Messengers, who had no other design than to procure the Light and Salvation of the World. This Messenger of God did often meet with the same treatment, as well as the late Mr. De Cort, who discovering too open a zeal for the publication of this Work, was prevented from accomplishing that design by a Death, that was procured by contrivances no less secret than criminal; concerning which I may justly use the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, (m)

I was like a lamb, or an ox that was brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying let us destroy (or poyson) the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.

For Sinners cannot endure that a good Person should by declaring the Truth, deprive them of the pretexts, which they use to enjoy their darling Sins with peace and security. And the wise are loath to see their Wisdom confounded, when they have once given way in their hearts to that proud conceit of being infallible when they are Assembled in a Body. As the Church was heretofore deluded by a Spirit of presumption in the days of the Prophets, who were persecuted under pretext that the Priests, the Learned, the Doctors and Pastors, whose failing as well as the Errors of the whole Church were expos'd by the Prophets, were infalliable in the possession and in the interpretation of the Law of God, and their Determinations and Counsels concerning Divine things. Come, said they, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah, for the land shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the Prophet: come and let us smite him with the Tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

But God has quite other Designs, (the Lord has said according to the declaration of an other Prophet) (o) Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear and worship of me is nothing but formality, and taught by the precept of men: therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work, their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid. This is an unavoidable judgment, which they must resolve to undergoe, and their resistance will only serve to make them be more entirely crusht by the powerful hand of God.

This will be to the little ones and to the simple matter of joy and gladness, and they shall sing praises unto the Spirit of God whom Jesus Christ shall send to possess the place of that human and diabolical Spirit, which he will extripate (p) blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

If you have a sincere desire to be of the Number of these little and simple ones, you will easily perceive by the Divine Light that is communicated to you, that God begins to fulfill his

(n) Jer 1. 8, 19. (o) Isa. 29. 13, 14. (p) 18. 26.

word as well as the desire that we profess to have in that Prayer of the Church, come lovely Spirit, and renew the Earth. You will afterwards be more fully convinc'd of this Truth by other works of this nature. This is faithfully and sincerely communicated to you according to the Manuscript of the late Mr. De Cort, who nourish'd his Soul with these Truths, by which he had been regenerated to God, and incited to renounce the Vanities of this World. I have neither added nor substracted any thing from it, except some words at the top of the Pages, and before the Conferences, to serve for an Abridgment of the matter, and a help to the memory of the Reader; I began also to quote the passages of the Holy Scripture, to shew that there is an entire conformity, not only of the Doctrine, Words, and Sentiments, but even of the Life, Conduct, Actions, and other Accidents, of this Maid, with those who were heretofore unquestionably enlighten'd and govern'd by the Holy Spirit. But since the prosecution of that Design would have required a great deal of time, and since it may be probably supposed that most Readers will not give themselves the trouble of searching and examining so great a number of passages; it was thought sufficient to illustrate the first Conference with all the particular Quotations; as a sample of that absolute uniformity with the Spirit of God and his direction, which might have been easily carried on throughout the whole Work: And in the remaining part of the Book you will only find the most necessary passages cited, or those which have most manifest relation to the Text.

God grant, Beloved Reader that you may reap from this Work an Advantage, which may dispose thy Soul to become a Child of his Grace, and to receive his Holy Spirit. This is the hearty and earnest desire of

P. P. P.

T H E

THE
PREFACE
OF
Monsieur de Cozt.
TO THE
READER.

Friendly Reader,

I Here present you with an Account of what befel me in a Voyage I made to a far Country, to come to which I travelled above a Year, accompanied with several of my own Country-men, who with me were Eye-witnesses of our meeting by the way with a Pilgrimes, who spoke to us admirable and amazing Things, that are capable of converting unto God all those who shall read or hear the hidden Secrets of the Righteousness and Mercy of God, and the Blindness of Men, and the Power which the Devil at present has over them.

The Thing is as profitable as astonishing; for it has never been conceived or comprehended by any humane Wit. It must needs proceed from a divine Understanding, and it must needs be a Celestial or Terrestrial Angel; for neither Philosophy nor Theology could ever teach me the Things which this Pilgrimes taught me in the small time wherein I travelled with her, but in a way so simple and so unaffected, that all her Words did pierce my Heart and enlighten my Understanding, working in my Soul Joy and Compunction together.

I was at firſt quite tranſported beſide my ſelf, and I thought all my Underſtanding was renvers'd while I heard her firſt Diſcourſes, being of Opinion that the Words of Jeſus Chriſt were fulfilled, in that he ſays [*I will deſtroy the Wiſdom of the Wiſe, and aboliſh the Prudence of the Prudent*] for of neceſſity all Men, how knowing and learned ſoever they be, muſt be ſtruck dumb and confounded by the ſimple Wiſdom of this Pilgrimeſs; and I took it for a ſingular Mercy of God that he was pleaſed yet to declare his Secrets to any of his Servants, wiſhing for the Memory of an Angel that I might be able to declare all that I heard of this Pilgrimeſs, ſince nothing proceeded from her Mouth which was not profitable, and moſt enlightning, very convincing and powerful, capable of converting the moſt hardened Hearts and obſtinate Sinners.

But I muſt yield to my Weakneſs, not being able to declare any other thing but what my Memory ſhall furniſh me with, Being helped by ſome Remarks which I made when I had the conveniency of Writing. I entreat the Reader that in this Narrative he may not ſeek for Ornament of Language, nor Philoſophical Diſcourſes, but the naked ſimple Truth, ſince God makes uſe of weak Things to confound the ſtrong.

I will not at all diſguiſe or adorn her Language, fearing to oppoſe the Deſigns which God has to manifeſt to all the World, that he reveals his Secrets to Babes, and that he reſiſts the mighty and the proud Ones of the Earth, from whom he conceals and hides his Secrets and Wonders.

For this Reaſon we have ground to ſay with *S. Auguſtin*, [*The Ignorant and the Unlearned take Heaven by force, and we with all our Sciences continue drown'd in earthly Affections: Are we aſhamed to follow them becauſe they have out-run us? We ought rather to be aſhamed not to follow them.*] And to add here alſo the Words which the Pilgrims of Emmau ſaid one to another, when they remembered what Jeſus Chriſt had ſpoken to them by the way, while he explained to them the Holy Scriptures, to wit [*Was not our Heart on fire, and did it not burn within us when he ſpoke to us in the way, and opened unto us the Holy Scriptures?*]

This Pilgrimeſs in ſpeaking to us, muſt certainly be animated with the ſame Spirit with which our Saviour was; for each of us felt his Heart to burn by her powerful Words, which did gently beget in our Souls a Contempt of created Things, and a Love of Things eternal, enlightning

ning our Understandings by Truths so clear ; that they could not proceed from any other than from the Father of all Lights.

She told us Things unheard of, so marvellous and sublime, that we often remained quite lost with admiration, for we had never heard such Things.

She explained likewise the Holy Scriptures so perfectly, that none of the holy Fathers have ever so done, nor any Body since the Creation of the World.

That which did most astonish us, was, That she told us she had never read nor learn'd them of any Body. She knew also the secret Thoughts of the Hearts of many : For a proof of which she told us Things so particular about our own inward State, that neither Men nor Devils could ever know them.

Which beset us many times ; for she warned us of divers Mischiefs hid under a Mask of Piety, saying [*That we were fallen into the dangerous Times foretold by Jesus Christ, wherein many call themselves Christians and his Disciples, who nevertheless are of the Synagogue of Satan, who call themselves the Priests of God, the Confessors and Guides of Souls, while they adhere unto the Devil by express Covenant: That these do seduce many by false appearances ; and that even those who have resolved to follow God are deceived by these false Prophets, who deceive even the Elect under a colour of Holiness and Devotion ; that all the World was now full of such Guides.*] Which at first did a little stumble us, for we could not be enclined to believe that so many People in Christendom, even Priests and religious Persons, were bound unto the Devil by express Covenant. We ask'd her for what reason we ought to believe a thing so abominable ? For it was always best to have a good Opinion of our Neighbour, until the contrary were manifest.

[*She says, Gentlemen, it is meet in the general that you entertain in your Minds a pious Belief that every one is better than your selves ; but if you piously believe, in particular, that all the Persons with whom you converse are good, you are undone. It is more needful for you to discover the Evil which they have hid within them, than their Good, which will advantage you nothing ; but their Evil may greatly hurt you, when it is unknown to you ; for you cannot beware of it while you do not know it, or at least are in doubt of it,*

It is with this pious Belief that the Good are entrapp'd by Satan, who would never follow the Ill which is manifest: But that which is hid under Good is much more dangerous.

You are free, Gentlemen, to believe of this what you please. For my part, I declare only what I learn in my inward Conversation with God.

I have many other Secrets to declare, but methinks you are too scrupulous to bear them. I will speak no more than you please. I know very well how to hold my peace if my Words offend you, or do not at all profit you.

Nevertheless, I tell you in Truth, that if these Evils be not made manifest to the World, all Men are in danger of perishing: For very shortly the Plagues of God will fall upon Christians, and if Men will not believe that they have thus forsaken God to join themselves unto the Devil, the most perfect will blaspheme against the same God who shall afflict them with divers Chastisements, such as the like have never yet fallen out.

She said as in a Spirit of Fury, God would be very unjust to exercise so much Rigour against the Christians, if they were as good as you believe them, or would think them to be: It were better for us to separate, for your Thoughts are altogether different from mine. Go, Gentlemen, pursue your way: For my part I love rather to walk alone, and not to speak to you any more, keeping my Secrets for my self; I never spoke so openly of these Things.] This so rough and confident Answer did inflame our desire to speak to her the more, that we might discover some other Thing; knowing well, that it is against the timorousness of the Feminine Sex to do and speak so positively, to Persons of Learning and Authority, as all of us were; nevertheless, like a strong Woman, who would place her Confidence in God alone, she answers us without fear, making appear sufficiently that she neither desired our Friendship nor our Company, no more than our Approbation, but with a generous Contempt she walked without any humane Respect, testifying abundantly that she sought for nothing upon Earth, and that she feared no other Thing but God.

Which we remarked sufficiently during the whole time of our Voyage, having never perceived her to baulk a word to please any Body, keeping always to the strait Truth, as well in small Things as in great. Her Spirit was firm and constant, always present to it self, we never saw her wandering nor distracted: She had a Judgment so just and equitable,

table, that she could not suffer the least Injustice, tho' it had been in her own favour.

This streight Judgment was always blind, without respecting either her Friends or Enemies, her Honour or Re-proach, her Ease or Trouble, her Hurt or Profit: In fine, we always discovered in her a perfect streightness on all sorts of Rencounters, and a Truth so firm, that never one Word did contradict another in so long a space of time and amidst so many different Discourses and Subjects. She spoke very little unask'd; and answer'd our Demands so effectually, that often we remained mute and without Reply in very sublime Things, being oblig'd to acknowledge, that the Wisdom infused by God does far surpass all the Wisdom of Men. But it is no wonder that God did communicate himself to this Soul, for she desired no other Communication nor Contentment, but only what she found with her God: For if we were about to tell her some News even of pious Matters, she begg'd we would not speak of them to her, saying, that they were nothing but Distractions: And when we entred into any strange Towns, where she had never been, she took no notice of any thing in them. For having one Day entred into a Town, and abode there for three Days, after we came out of it, I would needs speak of the fine Church that was there: She said, *Is there a Church there? Truly I did not see it.* Thus in whatsoever place she was, she continued always in her Recollection. We saw her often in Rencounters, where she met with Affronts and Contempt; and on other Occasions where she received Praises, she never changed her Countenance, receiving Contempt without Trouble, and Praises without pleasure: She shewed some Discontent when any Gift was offered her, or when we would have rendered her any Service, which she would never accept of, except in case of Necessity or Sickness.

We perceived her always of a joyful Countenance, but never to delight her self in any earthly Thing that might give her Joy. In short, we may all truly affirm, that we never observed in her any Vice, Sin, or any weakness of Spirit, but a perfect and solid Vertue, surpassing natural and humane Strength; which made us say, that her Life was altogether miraculous, as if *Adam* had never sin'd in her.

This we do not speak lightly, but after much proof and experience by so constant and familiar a Conversation, of
so

so long continuance, travelling with her Night and Day, amidst Ease and Trouble, Want and Abundance, and so many other Occasions which are to be met with in Travelling, of observing a Person exactly in all her Manners, where nothing can remain unknown or counterfeited, coming under the Eye and Judgment of Persons of Learning and Judgment as this Pilgrimage has done, who assuredly was sent to us from God, to manifest us his Secrets and his Wonders.

This is an Instance of his great Mercy, that in the midst of so gross universal Darkness, as is at present in the World, God has vouchsafed yet to send us such a Light, capable of enlightning the whole World, at least all those who will receive it: For no Body can seriously read or hear the Discourses of this Pilgrimage without discovering the state of his own Conscience, and also the poor Estate into which Christendom has now fallen, the blindness of Men, and the hazard of their Salvation.

She shews clearly that we live now in the last Times; that this is the Reign of Antichrist; that he has almost full Dominion over all Men; that his Kingdom will very shortly be at an end.

She does not draw her Discourses from imaginary Things, nor from fine Speculations invented by Philosophical or Poetical Reasonings; but in a Reasoning so firm and constant, that she seems to possess in her Nature the Abridgment of all the Sciences of Men together, with Truths so convincing, so clear and eloquent, capable of engaging every good Understanding to an infallible Belief, though her Stile is always simple and sincere. She spoke *[Of Excesses and Ravishments (which the Devour esteem Vertues) as great Imperfections and Weaknesses for Souls establish'd in Vertue, which consists only in Righteousness and Truth, and Faith, saying, that all the rest were nothing but amusements, on which a Soul establish'd in the Love of God will never rest.]* She told us such high Mysteries of our Faith, as never any has attain'd to so clear Understanding of them. She spoke of Judgment quite after another manner than all the Authors who ever wrote upon this Subject, and yet with such clearness, that every Mind would be ravish'd at it with pleasure and astonishment. She knew Things to come; and did not foretel them but by way of supposition, or related them as if she had dream'd them.

We found divers times that she could tell what past in her absence, and how our Souls behav'd themselves towards God.

She made no reckoning of all these extraordinary Graces; saying, *That they gave nothing to the Soul which possesses them; that neither Miracles nor Gifts of Prophecy were necessary to our Salvation; that one might have them and yet be damned; that all our Happiness consists in possessing in our Souls the Love of God, which is true Charity; that other Gifts are accidental; that the Wicked may indeed work Miracles and have the Gifts of Prophecy, when it pleases God; that the Devils themselves do frequently Things altogether miraculous, and foretel likewise Things to come. In short, this illuminated Soul desired nothing but what was solid and perfect, rejecting even a great many particularities which are mention'd in the Life of some Saints, saying, That either they had Imperfections among their Vertues, or rather that they who wrote their Lives were not endowed with the holy Spirit to discern true Vertue from natural Weaknesses; that God was not visible to the Eyes of the Body; that our Imagination may frame many Visions of divers Figures; and that the Devil mingles himself always in things sensible to our Gust and to our natural Senses; that there are great Cheats among Persons who make Profession of a spiritual Life; that the Devil slips in there as an Angel of Light; and that he who does not force himself to overcome his natural Inclinations, can never come to live Christianly; that all that is of Nature, is not of Grace; that to live a Christian one must live supernaturally; that our Soul is a Spirit; that God does not communicate himself unto it but in Spirit and in Truth;]* That there are none but Souls purified from themselves and from all earthly Objects who hear the Voice of God; that the Cares of ones Health, of his Honour and of his Wealth, are great hindrances to the receiving of divine Notices, which are formed by the sole motion of the Soul, which receives and understands them according as it is stript of it self. In short, this divine Soul told us so many Secrets of the mystical and inward Life, that all our Theology was too short and insufficient to answer her to so high Questions, not only in Matters of Theology, but also in all other Matters, according to the various Rencounters and Occurrences which fell out in so long a Voyage; so that one would have thought that tho' a Man had perused all sorts of Histories, and grown old in the Study of all sorts of Sciences, he could not know with
such

such Understanding, all the Things which this Pilgrimage told us.

Which she made very little reckoning of, saying, *That all the Sciences which do not serve as means to love God, are vain, and frequently the occasion of our Damnation.* Her Conversation was always serious; and when by chance we fell into any unprofitable or indifferent Discourse, she was silent, and calmly withdrew, making appear sufficiently that it was not agreeable to her; and sometimes she said, *[Discourses which profit nothing, do weary and oppress my Spirit. I love my Solitude better, in which it re-inforces its self, and becomes vigorous: And therefore I entreat you let me go alone as long as I profit you in nothing, and you will do me a pleasure.]*

It is impossible to write in particular the admirable Things which we heard of this Pilgrimage: She told us so great Marvels concerning the State of the World, the just Vengeance that God would take of wicked Christians, and the Mercy which he would shew unto the Good, that the like were never heard of; and it would be hard to believe them, if this did not come from the Mouth of a Soul directly illuminated, who spoke by the motion of the holy Spirit: So that we may say of her Discourses, what S. Paul said of his Rapture, *[That he had seen and heard things which Eyes had not seen, nor Ear heard, and that it has not entered into the mind of Man what God has prepared for his Elect.]* What she said was to fall out in the last Time, during the Judgment, and after the Judgment, was never before heard of nor conceived. They are Things which do ravish all Men with Fear, with Joy, and with Astonishment. For my part I can say as to my self, that the meeting with this Pilgrimage has withdrawn me from all sort of Evil, has given me a great desire of Vertue, and an absolute resolution of embracing an Evangelical Life, having discovered sufficiently by her Discourses, that without this no Body will be saved. Her Words have so enlightened my Understanding, that all the Learning I had acquired seems to me as Darkness and Ignorance in respect of that divine Wisdom which is so mercifully poured out upon the Earth by the Organ of a silly Maid. I wish that every one had seen her, and heard her as I have done, and might receive thereby the same Operations which my Soul has felt; for I look upon her Acquaintance as a greater favour, than all the Graces and Favours which God has bestowed on me
in

in this World; yea, even than my Creation it self, for that would serve me in little stead, without the working out of my Salvation, which would have been in great danger, if I had not attain'd to the knowledge of my Self, and of the Designs and Marvels of God, which I have learned and discovered by the means of this Creature; and she has certainly been sent me as the only means of the perfection of my Soul, and of all those who will profit by the recital of this Narrative, which I find my self obliged to publish for the profit of many. This is the true *Treasure hid in the Earth*. He who shall find it, ought to sell all that he has to buy this Ground, to the end he may discover and find this Treasure, and take it up with Joy, as the most precious Thing of the World. I cannot hinder some who with Evil or are Enemies to the Truth, from finding or pretending something that is not agreeable to them, for the Light does always offend Blear-Eyes, who cannot endure the Light, and the Truth which reproves is never agreeable to our Senses: But I would admonish them to beware of reprehending or making themselves Masters of the holy Spirit. I behov'd, for some time, to suspend my Judgment as to the Belief of some Points of Doctrin, for I had learn'd them from my Masters in another sense; but since I have laid aside all these Authors who have written us their Sentiments, and fix'd on the sacred Text of the holy Scriptures, I have found so much Conformity in them, with the Life, Manners and Words of this Pilgrimage, that no Doubts could come any longer into my Mind, and I could not, without betraying my Conscience, give her so much as one Contradiction: Since that gives me an infallible proof, that this Soul is truly possess'd by the holy Spirit, who has brought forth in her his Twelve Fruits, his Seven Gifts, and the Eight Beatitudes which Jesus Christ has taught.

I should believe I committed a great sin to think that any other Thing might proceed from such a Source than what is Divine; so much the rather, that I have always remarked that this Soul did act in nothing naturally, but by supernatural Motives, never being moved but by the motion of the holy Spirit: In confirmation of which I would be ready to spend the last drop of my Blood, to the end that none might reject this Light, *to love rather their Darkness,*

ness, as Jesus Christ has foretold that many would do; but that every one may embrace it for Salvation, to the end we may altogether enjoy the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is here so particularly treated of, with eternal Joy and Contentment. Which is earnestly wisht you, by

Friendly Reader,

Your most affectionate

in JESUS CHRIST,

Christian de Cort,

*at Mechlin;
the 10th of
August, 1667.*

*Superiour of the Oratory,
and Pastor of St. John at
Mechlin.*

M. A. B.'s Confession of Faith, which she presented at the Court of Gottorp, to oppose the Calumnies which the Church-men had spread, that they might raise Suspicions of the Purity of her Faith.

I. I Am a Christian, and I believe all that a true Christian ought to believe.

II. I was baptized in the Catholick Church, in the Name of the Father, in the Name of the Son, in the Name of the Holy Ghost.

III. I believe the Twelve Articles of the Creed or the Apostles Symbol, and I do not doubt of any one Article thereof.

IV. I believe that Jesus Christ is true God, and that he is also true Man, and that he is the Saviour and Redeemer of the World.

V. I believe in the Gospels, the holy Prophets, and all the holy Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament.

And I will live and die in all the Points of this Belief, which I protest before God and Men, to all those whom it shall concern.

In Testimony whereof I have signed this my true Confession with my Hand, and seal'd it with my Seal. At Sleswick the 11th of March, 1675.

Anthionette Bourignon.

L. S.

*A Catalogue of the BOOKS written by M. A. B.
born at L'Isle in Flanders.*

1. **T**HE Life of *M. Antonia Bourignon*.
2. God's Call and Men's Refusal; in 2 parts.
3. Light arisen in Darkness; in 4 parts.
4. The Grave of false Theology driven out by the true coming of the holy Spirit; in 4 parts.
5. An Advertisement against the Quakers.
6. A Treatise of solid Vertue; in 2 parts.
7. The Light of the World; in 3 parts.
8. The Academy of learn'd Divines; in 3 parts.
9. The Testimony of the Truth; in 2 parts.
10. Innocence manifested and Truth discovered.
11. The Touchstone.
12. The Blindness of Men now; in 2 parts.
13. Antichrist discovered; in 3 parts.
14. The new Heaven and the new Earth.
15. The holy Perspective.
16. The last Mercy of God.
17. The renewing of the Gospel Spirit; in 3 parts.
18. The Stones of the New Jerusalem.
19. The Persecutions of the Just.
20. The Morning Star.
21. The Confusion of the Builders of Babel.
22. Saving Instructions and Advices.

The most part of these Works are Translated from the French into the Dutch and High Dutch; the first part of Solid Vertue, the Touchstone, and the first part of the renewing of the Gospel Spirit, are also in Latin.

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The First Part.

The First Conference.

Of Gods dealing with A. B. particularly how he instructed her immediately from her Infancy; the opposition of men; of Christian perfection, and of the deplorable state of Christians.

As we advanc'd in our journey, still travelling towards the Sun rising, being already more than half way, we perceiv'd, at a distance, one walking before us; not knowing at first who it was, because of the distance, we remark'd only that it was a person alone, who desir'd no Company, but retir'd aside as soon as any body approach'd, and hid herself, until we mending our pace had come nearer: and when we beheld this person, we perceived she was a Maid, who appear'd young enough; and tho she was simply apparelled, she had notwithstanding a grave and majestick Mien. We saw in her face the marks and the joy of a serene and contented soul. Her gait was always of an equal pace, neither slow nor hasty: her looks gave both joy and fear: she did not refuse to speak to us in our Language, tho it was not natural to her; and having ask'd her whither she was going? she said, In Pilgrimage for penitence for her own sins, and those of others. And having ask'd her, from whence she came? she said, From afar: for she had travell'd many years, and was harrafs'd by the way, and discolor'd by the Sun.

We ask'd, what she design'd by so long and troublesome voyages, dangerous for a Maid alone; remonstrating to her, that there were many other means to do penitence in her own Country without being in danger of hunger, thirst, unhappy rencounters, and many other inconveniencies, which may fall out intravelling alone; and that at least she ought to take some Company.

To which she answer'd; That she was oblig'd to travel alone, for she had found no body that would accompany her; and that many had indeed gone along with her for some time, but upon the first temptation, hunger, or incommmodity, they had staid behind, not knowing how to endure penitence, because they had (a) too much love for themselves, and too little affection to seek God; esteeming their ease more, than the contentment there is in the loving and following of him: for this cause they had left her.

And as for Dangers, God preserv'd her; (b) she having past thro many dangers without being hurt; that her confidence was in him alone, who (c) has all power in heaven and in earth; that he never forsakes them (d) who put their confidence in him; that she reckon'd it a happiness to suffer hunger, thirst, and other troublesome things (e); since Christ had chosen (f) such sufferings to give us an example (g), and to the end we might follow him; and that she had no other intention in this undertaking but to abandon the world, to deny her self (h), and to imitate Jesus Christ; which she could not so well do (i) in her own Country, since the care of temporal wealth (k), the love of friends, and the pleasures there are in being honour'd and esteem'd, are all things which withdraw from God, and hinder the resigning of our selves to him; that penitences chosen after our mode (l) are full of self-love; but that (m) those which God permits to befall us are pure; that the length of the way was not troublesome to her, for she had no desire of ever staying in one fixt place, because there she found too many distractions by the importunity (n) of the conver-

(a) 2 Tim. 4. 10. (b) Ps. 34. 20. (c) Mat. 28. 18. (d) Ps. 25. 3.
 (e) 2 Cor. 12. 10. (f) Heb. 12. 2. (g) 2 Pet. 2. 21. (h) Mat.
 16. 24. (i) Ps. 45. 11. (k) 1 Joh. 2. 15, 16. (l) Colos. 2. 22, 23.
 (m) 1 Pet. 1. 6, 7. (n) Ps. 120. 5, 7.

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sation of men, who would have disturb'd her inward repose; and that she (o) desir'd very much to live unknown.

We admir'd all this answer, for it seem'd not to proceed from human sence, since Nature takes no part in so pious a resolution, and one must live supernaturally to despise ease, friends, and honours, and to love sufferings and fatigues, and flee the conversation of men: seeing they are all sociable Creatures, delighting themselves among their equals; and rejoicing to converse with their like. It gave us sentiments of confusion, saying one to another, what Confusion shall we have in the day of Judgment; when simple Girls do such things to please God, and we, amidst all our Learning and Studies, are so far remov'd from such sentiments! Truly this Child will condemn us. We resolv'd to accompany her, and to examine her more narrowly, seeing there was something peculiar in her, above the spirit and capacity of the female sex; for her discourses were firm, constant, and full of judgment, and of divine wisdom, tho no ways artificial nor polite, but simple and true, and in every thing admirable.

We ask'd her, if it was therefore necessary that every one should leave their Country to be sav'd?

To which she answer'd, No; for God is to be found every where, and in all places (p): that those who are not wedded to any thing have no need of doing it; but as for her, the removing from her native Country serv'd her as a powerful means to love God alone; since before her withdrawing from it, her affection was set upon her City, her House, her Parents, her Friends, as all appertaining to her; but that having done violence to her nature to abandon them, she had acquir'd a great liberty of spirit to flie unto God. But for other persons, who feel no affection to those things which belong to them, they may indeed (r) work out their salvation in every place; saying, that every one ought to examine themselves in this matter, as in all others, and to remove or avoid all things (s) which hinder them from resigning themselves wholly to God, without doing of which there is no salvation.

And having ask'd her, if to be sav'd, one must suffer hunger and thirst, and all other things troublesome to the body?

(o) Ps. 55. 7, 8. (p) Act. 17. 27, 28. (q) Mat. 12. 37, 38. Psal. 45: 12. (r) Job. 4. 21, 23. (s) Mark. 9. 42.

She said, That a man ought not to seek nor affect these things (*t*), but when it pleases God to send them by any accident, he ought (*u*) to suffer them willingly, and to rejoyce that he makes us worthy to follow him, and to imitate his sufferings.

Having ask'd her, if poverty was necessary to salvation?

She said, That temporal Goods were not evil in themselves, but that (*x*) poverty of spirit was necessary to salvation: because a soul who loves and desires temporal goods, (*y*) cannot love God with all his heart, nor fulfil the first and the greatest Commandment; that riches (*z*) were a great burthen; that they occasion'd great distractions, and disquiet; that the most secure way was to rid ones self of them, unless they serve as means to advance the Glory of God, or succour our Neighbour in his necessity; that many deceiv'd themselves, believing they possess them without affection to them, while they would be much troubled to abandon them; that we may indeed use them, but not love them; that many (*a*) will be damn'd for having lov'd riches; and that a great many are stopt in the mid way of Vertue by the cares and desires of riches.

And asking her, if one might not receive honour, or suffer to be belov'd by men?

She said, That he who makes himself be honour'd, robs the honour (*b*) which is due to God only; and if it be fit to suffer honour for any estate or dignity, it ought to be suffer'd with regret, as a thing perillous to the infirmity of our corrupt nature, which willingly delights in honour, which ordinarily tickles the sense, and blows up the heart, (*d*) making the soul to perish; forasmuch as the honours which we receive, without referring them to God, are all sins, for there is none but God alone who deserves honour; and man, how great and exalted soever he may be, can never merit (*f*) any thing but contempt and confusion; for he being nothing but (*g*) a silly worm of the earth, has notwithstanding rebell'd (*h*) against his God and Creator. And as to the desire (*i*) of

(*t*) *Mat.* 4. 7. (*u*) *Job* 1. 21. 2. 10. (*x*) *Mat.* 5. 3. (*y*) 6. 21. (*z*) 13. 22. 1 *Tim.* 6. 9, 10, 17, 18. (*a*) *Eccles.* 27. 1. (*b*) *Pf.* 115. 1. (*c*) *Gal.* 5. 26. (*d*) *Prov.* 16. 18. (*e*) *Mat.* 6. 13. (*f*) *Dan.* 9. 7, 8. (*g*) *Pf.* 27. 7. (*h*) *Lam. Jer.* 3. 42. (*i*) *Jam.* 4. 4.

Conf I. *The Conduct of an illuminated Soul.* 5

being lov'd by men, that this proceeds from self love; that our nature affects always to be lov'd, to receive some effect of good will from those who love it; but that all which is of nature, is not of (k) Grace; that he who acts spiritually, and seeks the perfection of his soul, ought to regret, and be troubled (l) to see, that man, who is created only to love God, (m) should amuse himself in loving such a creature as he, who has no power to better the object which he loves; and that it is loss of time, and the turning of (o) ones self away from God, to love men, or to desire to be lov'd by them. We may indeed desire, that they love God in us (p), for we are all his Images; and we may also love them as the Images of God, since he commands us (p) to love our Neighbours as our selves, forasmuch as both are the Images of the same God; but this love ought to be so purely for God, that we should have no respect (q) of persons, rich, poor, friends and enemies, kindred or strangers; and which is very rare to see, that in our love, (s) we should affect those in whom God lives and operates most; on the contrary, we regard often what does most delight our senses, or rather what is, most (r) for our advantage; and thus we render our love vain, or please the vanity of those who love us. For this cause I have found it more sure to avoid all persons who would love me. Nature does often flatter us in this point, perswading us that we love the soul of the person (u), when we love only the body, and its endowments, or our own (x) delectation and advantage.

And having ask'd her, why she would not stay in one fixt place, since she was out of her own Country; and why she would not be known?

She answered; Tho I am a Stranger, yet I may be taken notice of by staying long in one place, which I do not desire; for men are full (y) of vain curiosity, they would hinder my inward repose and quiet without any profit; therefore I love rather to travel and continue unknown: for men cannot give me any thing, nor I them.

And having replied unto her, that men might instruct her in

(k) *Joh.* 3. 6. (l) *Pf.* 119. 153. (m) *Mat.* 22. 37, 39. (n) *Pf.* 62. 10. (o) 146. 3, 4. (p) 1 *Joh.* 4. 7, 8. 3. 2. (q) *Mat.* 22. 38. (r) *Jam.* 2. 8, 9. (s) *Pf.* 101. 6. 119. 53. (t) *Phil.* 2. 21. (u) *Gal.* 4. 17. (x) *Prov.* 19. 4. 6. (y) *Eccles.* 1. 8.

the matter of perfection, or that she her self might also instruct some others.

She answer'd: (z) I never learn'd any thing from any man; and as to the teaching of them, they have too much presumption (a) of their own knowledge, to hearken to a Child as I am. I choose rather to leave them in their Ignorance (b), than to speak to them to be pursued and persecuted by them.

I ask'd her, if she was not afraid of being wanting in Charity to her Neighbours while she would not teach them, or believ'd that they would persecute her in well-doing?

She said, Sir, if I had not made the experiment, I durst not say so: but believe me I have search'd in diverse places for persons who were esteem'd good men, to declare my sentiments to them, and to manifest the blindness that is now in Christendom; and (c) I have not found any body who has followed my sayings. on the contrary, some have reproach'd and persecuted me, so that I have been constrain'd to withdraw out of their reach (d), for they would have treated me hardly, and even imprison'd me, because I told them the truth, which they will not learn, because it reproves 'em (e). They oppose themselves and are alarm'd against this truth, more than against the Devil himself: at this time it is put out of credit (f); those who possess it are oblig'd to hold their peace, and to conceal themselves.

I have experienc'd this in divers Countries, where I have every where met with this opposition; by which I sufficiently perceive, that the (g) darkness is universal thro all the world. I cannot be wanting in charity in this point: for I have often expos'd (h) my Life for the salvation of my Neighbour, and I would do it yet if I found (i) matter dispos'd; which failing, I am resolv'd to continue alone (k), tho with regret, seeing all the world perish while they will have no help, and will not know their blindness. I do not believe that God will reckon with me (m), as being wanting on my part to my Neighbour in what was in my power.

(z) Gal. 1. 11, 12. 1 Joh. 2. 27 (a) Joh. 9. 34. (b) Prov. 23. 9. (c) Jer. 6. 10. (d) Jer. 36. 19, 26. Joh. 9. 59. Joh. 10. 39. (e) Is. 29. 21, 30. 9, 10, 11. Prov. 1. 24, 25. (f) 2 Tim. 4. 3. (g) Is. 40. 2. (h) Joh. 15. 13. (i) 1 Joh. 3. 16. (k) Jer. 9. 2, 3. (l) 51. 9. (m) As 18. 6.

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I ask'd her from whence she deriv'd her sentiments, and what Books she made use of for her spiritual reading?

She said: She had never taken any thing out of Books; that she made no use of them, nor carried any with her on the way, but a small one, in which were written the **WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST**, which she carried instead of a Box of Reliques; not to read it, but out of devotion; esteeming those words more than all the Reliques of the world; and as for her sentiments, that they came to her without her knowing (a) how: that in her Childhood she had been instructed in the principles of the Catholick Faith; and that coming afterwards to the use of reason, she found her self (p) replenish'd with the Doctrines of Jesus Christ, and entertain'd her spirit with the consideration of the life of the (q) first Christians. These thoughts inflam'd her with a desire of imitating and following them; therefore she said to her parents and friends, (r) *Let us go into the Country where the Christians live whom Jesus Christ has taught.* And when they answer'd her, *Here is the Land of the Christians; Jesus Christ has taught us.* She thought within her self, that this (s) could not be true: that the life which she, and all other persons led, was not conformable to the (t) Doctrine of Jesus Christ, nor to that of the first Christians. She always ask'd again, *Where was the Land of the Christians?* till every one derided her (u), as if she had been a Fool, assuring her, that she liv'd in the Land of Christians, and that they had the Doctrine of Jesus Christ: which she could not comprehend, saying, *I see here Coffers full of Silver, costly Furniture, and fine Houses; whereas Jesus Christ was poor, and (w) born in a Stable: How can we be Christians? I cannot believe this.* At last, she resolv'd not to speak (x) any more of it; thinking in the mean time how she might find the way, and the opportunity of coming one day into the Land of Christians.

While she consider'd all the actions and deportment of men, she found them always more contrary to her sentiments; which made her often weep (y) when she was alone, and she made her complaint to

(n) Jo. 7. 15, 16. (o) 2 Cor. 12. 3. (p) Ps. 71. 17. (q) Heb. 12. 1, 2. (r) Psal. 111. 84. 1. (s) 1 Joh. 2. 3, 4. (t) 2 Joh. 9. (u) Ps. 119. 141. Jer. 20. 7. (w) Luc. 2. 7. (x) Jer. 20. 9. (y) Ps. 119. 135.

Jesus Christ, and ask'd him, (z), how she might live as a Christian, and be his Spouse.

It seems, *says she*, Sir, that God had pity on my tender tears; for a little after I receiv'd a secret advertisement (a), as if some one had spoken (b) within me, and answered my demands. This gave me so much consolation, that (c) childish plays and pleasures were no more agreeable to me. I could find no other contentment, but in entertaining my self with these secret (d) thoughts, that taught me all the sentiments I still retain, not but thro' my wickedness I lost this conversation for a time (e), when inclining to follow the pleasures of the world, and to give my self to the vanities of youth, earthly sentiments began to possess my spirit. But the great mercy of God has since recall'd me, and (f) restor'd the same inward delights, with more solidity and light.

I never acquir'd sciences any other way than by recollection (g). I have no need either of Books (h) or Masters to teach me; on the contrary, they would be a great hindrance to me (i), if I should make use of them; even an Angel from Heaven, (k) if visible, would hinder me.

This I could hardly understand, saying to her, if an Angel from Heaven would be a hindrance to you, how dare we speak to you any more to hinder you?

She said, Do not mistake me, Sir, I mean that an Angel from Heaven can teach me no more than I learn by (l) my inward conversation; therefore he would be unprofitable to me; but you cannot hinder me so long as you profit by my words; my Charity obliges me to leave my own Contentment of being with God, (m) to draw my Neighbour thither.

I feel indeed, that your soul receives its light in speaking to me, and (n) that you profit much in hearing me; therefore ask what you please, and I will answer you, as far as it shall please God to permit. I am well pleas'd to shew Charity to my Neighbour. I find my God always;

(z) Ps. 119. 9. *Ask* 9. 5. (a) Ps. 16. 7. (b) 35. 3. (c) Jer. 15. 16. (d) Ps. 119. 174. (e) Cant. 5. 2, 6. (f) 6. 13. (g) Ps. 102. 8. (h) Ps. 119. 98, 99, 100. (i) Hab. 2. 20. (k) Cant. 8. 9. (l) 1. Job. 2. 27. (m) Phil. 1. 23, 24. (n) Luk. 24. 32.

but not always souls dispos'd to receive his instructions. He teaches me to prefer Charity (o) to his Consolations and the sensible pleasures which he gives me.

A felt in my Soul such Consolation as I cannot express, in bearing things so admirable. Her words pick'd my Soul. I would have done her honour. She says to me :

(p) Beware of that, Sir, for I hate two things, viz. honour and sin. You are a Priest, to whom honour is due for your dignity. I am nothing but a simple Child. If God impart to you his Graces by me, it is to him you (q) owe the acknowledgment, and not to me ; for I am (r) nothing : and if he should withdraw his Graces from me, I should be worse than nothing, being inclin'd to evil which nothing cannot be.

We observed in her all profound humility of heart, accompanied with great righteousness and truth. She did not affect humble discourses, but held always the exact truth in every thing, saying what was to her praise, as well as what was to her contempt : telling us, that under humble words and countenances the highest Pride was (s) conceal'd ; that he who affects to be esteem'd humble, presumes to bear the name and the appearance of the most perfect vertue ; because this humility is the (t) foundation of all perfection, without which nothing is to be esteem'd ; for watchings, discipline, and other mortifications of the body, are nothing but vanity (u) without humility. Even prayer (v) without humility, is nothing but hypocrisy. For (x) God resists the proud ; and gives his grace to the humble.

We ask'd her wherein true Humility consists ?

She said : In the knowledge (a) of oneself : for he who knows himself truly, can never attribute to himself (b) any Good, either Natural (c) or Spiritual : for he will truly perceive that he has not power to make one hair grow upon his head (d), nor to give himself one day of health, or one moment of Life : he will see that he is in his nature more miserable than any living creature upon earth, depending upon another in every thing ; which

(o) Rom. 15. 1, 2, 3. (p) Act 10. 25, 26. (q) Rev. 22. 9. (r) Ps. 32. 6. 2 Cor. 12. 11. (s) Micah 6. 16. (t) Math. 6. 8. Math. 11. 29. (u) Colos. 2. 18, 21, 22. 23. (x) Mar. 6. 5, 6, 7. (y) 1 Pet. 5. 5. (a) Math. 18. 13. (b) 1 Cor. 15. 10. (c) Job 10. 8, 12. (d) Mark. 5. 36.

will keep him voluntarily pliant and submissive to others, because of the need he has to depend upon another for the maintenance of his body; and as to his mind, he who knows himself, will judge truly, that there is nothing more (e) frail and unconstant than the mind of man, which changes every moment, and cannot know its true Good, since we are all born in Ignorance and Weakness, there being nothing to be found more miserable than a person subjected to his own passions and will (f); he is in a perpetual slavery (g), without rest, or contentment (h).

X And as to the superiour and divine part, what weakness (i) to do Good! what bent and inclination to evil! what violence to overcome vice! in one word, man is the abridgment and the abstract of all sorts of miseries. This is that which Job so bitterly (k) lamented. But whosoever attains to this knowledge of himself, he must needs be humble of heart, and subject to the Government and Will of God; upon whom he knows that he entirely depends. Behold, wherein true Humility consists; pride proceeding from no other thing but from the (l) Ignorance of our selves, and from a not depending upon God, attributing foolishly some authority and power to our selves, desiring to depend upon our own will, which is altogether deprav'd and inclin'd to all sort of evil, our heart being puff'd up with our very miseries, for there is no other thing in us but miseries, for which alone we esteem our selves to be something, tho in effect we are worse than nothing, which doth no evil.

By which we abundantly see that humility cannot consist in humble words and gestures, but only in the knowledge of our nothingness; and that humble actions do often serve as matter for our pride: for to desire to appear humble, is to be proud. We ought to be truly humble before God, but not desire to appear such before men (n).

We ask'd her, wherein true Perfection did consist?

She said, in (o) the LOVE OF GOD: For that he who loves God cannot sin, nor offend (p) him whom he

(e) Jam. 1. 8. (f) Eph. 2. 3. 4. 17, 19. (g) 2 Pet. 2. 19. (h) If. 57. 20, 21. (i) Gen. 8. 21. (k) Job 14. 1. (l) Rom. 1. 21, 22 (m) Mar. 6. 28. (n) *ibid.* (o) Mat. 22. 37, 40. 1 Cor. 13. 13. (p) Job. 14. 23.

loves, that this love is a law and rule to all our actions; that *S. Augustin* said well, in saying *Love, and do what you will*; because he who loves God cannot do evil, while all that he does centers in this love which he bears to God.

This love likewise cannot remain idle; it must needs produce all sorts of vertues, principally (q) *Charity*, which is inseparable from the love of God, for since we cannot see or touch God, we do it in part in our Neighbour, who is the true Image of God. This begets in our will a desire of good will toward our Neighbour, wishing and procuring him the same temporal and spiritual good things, which we wish and pretend to for our selves, because of the love (r) we bear to God, whom our Neighbour represents, from whence all sort of perfections do proceed, without which there can be no true perfection, since that is all summ'd up and contain'd in the love of God, and of our Neighbour; for he who loves God will exercise himself in the practice of all sorts (s) of vertues, to the end he may render himself agreeable to him whom he loves: if he sees that his God (t) has been little, he will never desire to be great; or that his God has been poor, he will never desire to be rich; or despis'd, he will never desire to be honour'd; and so of the rest. And if he love his Neighbour out of Charity, he will yield to him, and (u) serve him in his need; wishing him no other evil than he would wish to himself: he will willingly bear with his infirmities, procuring on all occasions his good and advantage, as his own. So that all Perfection consists in this *LOVE OF GOD, AND OF OUR NEIGHBOUR FOR GOD*. All the rest are nothing but amusements and lies. When we place perfection in any other subject (x) we deceive our selves.

These answers did ravish us with astonishment, being obliged to acknowledge, that they were most true in the most perfect and accomplish'd sense.

Having ask'd her, By what means we might attain to this LOVE OF GOD, which is true Charity, since we are all born in such misery, and that God has subjected us to so many evils bodily and spiritual, and that our Nature has more need of help and succour than any other Creature?

(q) 1 Joh. 4. 11, 12. (r) 1 Joh. 5. 1, 2. (s) 4. 17 (t) Phil 2 8.

(u) 1 Cor. 13 3-8. (x) 1 Cor. 13. 1-4.

To this she answer'd gravely: Softly, Sir, do not blaspheme against God; for it is not he who (y) has subjected us to so many evils. He can never do evil. All that comes from him (z) is most good and perfect; he created us (a) in an altogether holy, and perfect state, with an immortal body, and a divine soul, subject to none but himself, having given us a spirit enlighten'd to know him, and a power to rule over all the creatures both terrestrial and infernal; and if he has oblig'd us to aid and succour one another, this is not that he had created us more infirm than any other living creature, but only to the end (b) he might afford us matter for entertaining mutual Charity and Union together, one assisting his Brother out of love, the other being led to love him by the assistance and benefits which he receives from him; and thus perpetually to maintain this love by the aliment of the need that we have of one another, to the end we might continue united (c) together, as Jesus Christ is united to his Father. And even the manner of the Generation of men, is ordain'd for no other reason, but always to preserve this perfect unity of body and spirit. Thus you see that God has done all things well, tho it seems sometimes to our ignorance that many evil things come from God, the (d) only Author of all good, and the (e) Destroyer of all evil. It is (f) our sin which has caused all the miseries under which we continually groan; the maladies and infirmities of body are engender'd in us by sin; the weakness, ignorance, and inconstancy of our spirit do proceed from sin. That all the creatures rise up against us, and hurt us, this is but to take just vengeance of the rebellion which we have committed against God by sin. It is a blasphemy therefore, to say, That God has subjected us to so many evils; since we our selves only are the Authors of them; and he can never do evil, no not to (g) damn us, if we do not damn our selves; and to know how, and by what means, we may attain to the LOVE OF GOD, which is true Charity, we need only take the Gospel, (h) and there observe in particular the instructions which Jesus

(y) Jer. 5. 24, 25. (z) Deut. 32. 4. (a) Gen. I. 26, 31. (b) 1 Cor. 12. 25. (c) Job. 17. 22, 27. (d) Jam. 1. 17. (e) Rev. 21. 4. (f) Rom. 5. 12. 1. 21. (g) Hos. 13. 9. (h) Job 14. 21. 1 Job. 5. 3.

Christ and his Apostles have left us in writing, and put them in practice.

Behold the sure means to attain to true Charity, without which (i) no body can be sav'd. It is not necessary that we seek any other means than those which Jesus Christ has taught us by word and deed (l).

I said to her; *if to be sav'd one must have this perfect Charity, few persons will attain to salvation, for we do not observe now that the Charity of which she speaks, does possess the hearts of men.*

She answers; This is to be bewail'd with tears of blood, for no body shall be sav'd without it, as St. Paul affirms, (m) that *Tho we would bestow all our goods to feed the poor, tho we could remove Mountains, tho we had the Gift of Prophecy; yea, tho we would give our body to be burned; yet all this would be nothing for our Salvation without Charity.* And if you will exactly run over all the holy Scriptures, you shall find by the sayings (n) of Jesus Christ, of (o) the Apostles, and of (p) all the holy Prophets; that never any person shall be sav'd without this Charity, which consists in the LOVE OF GOD, and of our Neighbour for God. In the mean time no body possesseth this Charity, and almost all the world presumes to be sav'd.

There is now, Sir, so great darkness in the whole (q) world, that no body discerns truth from falsehood, since they have taught Christians, that the means of living well, and of being sav'd, do consist (r) in going to Church, in praying morning and evening, and in confessing and communicating often. By these things they have annull'd the Law of God, and stifled Charity; for this is no more in use among Christians; it is not so much as known by them, and they understand not what true CHARITY is, because this name is now appropriated to the gifts which persons bestow on Monks, religious persons, the superfluous Ornaments and Buildings of Monasteries and Churches: they have baptiz'd by the name of Charity all these Gifts, Presents, and Legacies.

And I, in my inward conversation, do find them to be

(i) 1 Cor. 13. 1-5. (l) Joh. 6. 68. (m) 1 Cor. 13. 1-5. (n) Joh. 14. 23. (o) 1 Cor. 16. 22. (p) Ps. 18. 1. 116. 1. Prov. 3. 17. (q) If. 60. 2. (r) If. 1. 4, 16. 58. 2, 3. (s) Luke 13. 26.

sensual affections, and call them, *Robbery and Avarice*: for he who receives Presents, without necessity, by way of Alms, does certainly commit Robbery, and robs the poor and necessitous, who alone are capable of receiving alms: So that he (whosoever he be) having necessities for the support of his life, being able to gain them by some trade or labour, is oblig'd to restore all the gifts and presents which he receives by way of alms; and that person commits the sin of avarice, who covets more than what is simply necessary for the support of his life: for it is a great folly for a Traveller to load himself with burthens, which are not necessary to him for the accomplishing of his Voyage. Thus no body can enrich himself, or heap up earthly goods without the Lust of Avarice; which sin, as all others, does blind souls (t); rendring them insensible (u) of their own hurt: But because they have introduc'd the calling of these vices and sins by the name of Charity, every one believes they have it while they co-operate to these vices; by this the Devil has seiz'd on the Throne of God, and reigns in the Sanctuary, by falshood, whereas God ought to reign there by truth.

Behold the deplorable state in which we live at present; the danger is so much the greater, that all the evils are (y) cover'd with vertue and piety, that good men may be the more deceiv'd, who live and die in this horrible darkness, not knowing what true Charity is, far less do they possess it; so that I despair of their Salvation: If they do not perceive this truth, of Charity, (z) they can never be sav'd; since not knowing it, they cannot love it, nor endeavour to find it, while they think it is enough to bear the name of *charitable*; tho they neither know nor possess true Charity. There are so many such errors now in *Christendom*, that Christians are by them led insensibly into Hell, while they believe that they are assuredly in the way of Paradise.

I ask'd her; If the goodness of God would permit that so many persons should go to perdition while they believe that they do well, and follow the counsel of learned men, and such as are authoriz'd by the Church?

(t) *Wisd.* 2. 21. 2 *Cor.* 4. 4. (u) *Eph.* 4. 19. (y) 2 *Cor.* 13. 14. *Ij.* 5. 20. (z) 1 *Cor.* 13. 1st.

Conf. I. *The Deplorable State of Christians.* 15

She said: Truly, Sir, there will be more Christian Souls damn'd by these means, than by gross, visible and material sins; because all those persons who think to be sav'd, live and die in the sins against the Holy Ghost, *which will not be pardon'd (a) neither in this world nor in the other.*

Not that these sins are so enormous that they cannot be pardon'd (b), but because they are inward and spiritual, little known, and far less (c) feared. The most devout persons are tainted with them, and will never repent of them as long as they presume to be sav'd, according to the doctrine of the learned of this age.

This is not against the goodness and mercy of God, because he has left us his doctrine in writing in his Gospel and the other holy Scriptures, which will never perish, according to the promise; *that (e) heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away.* Every one may have recourse thither without amusing himself with the new inventions of men, *(f) Leaving the fountain of living waters, to draw out of broken Cisterns, which can hold no water.*

Ignorance (g) will not excuse sin. We feel indeed in our Conscience, that we do not follow the doctrine of Jesus Christ; that our life and our manners are in nothing conformable to the life of the first Christians; that our heart is not inflam'd with the *LOVE OF GOD*, nor Charity to our Neighbour: and nevertheless we would flatter our selves with the presumption of our salvation, (h) because men do promise it to us, who have no power to give it to us (i), no more than to themselves. In this point our Ignorance is too gross and affected, and will not serve to excuse us before God, but will rather serve for our Condemnation; for we might always find the truth, if we had done our endeavour to seek it (l). But because our Guides have taught us ways of salvation more pleasing to our senses and to our taste, (m) we have follow'd them rather than those which Jesus Christ has shewn by his deeds, and taught by his word. It is just, (n) that he abandon us

(a) *Math.* 12. 31, 32. (b) *Is.* 1. 18. (c) *Rev.* 3. 17. 18. 7. (d) *2 Tim.* 3. 16. (e) *Math.* 24. 35. (f) *Jer.* 2. 13. (g) *Pf.* 14. 2-5. *1 Cor.* 15. 34. (h) *2 Pet.* 2. 19. (i) *Pf.* 146 3. (l) *Prov.* 8. 17. *Mat.* 7 7. (m) *2 Pet.* 2. 3. (n) *Is.* 29. 10, 13, 14. *1 Thes.* 2. 10. 4, 12.

to the spirit of error, since of our own free will, we have more esteem'd Error than the Truth, which alone leads to Salvation.

I ask'd her; If she did not esteem the Priests and Guides of Souls, and if to attain to Salvation we ought not to follow their Instructions?

She said: Yes, Sir; I honour and esteem true Priests, because they ought to be (o) the Ambassadors of God, to distribute to the ignorant the points of Faith (p), and the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which is the nourishment (q) of all Christian Souls. But I may say with a sensible regret, that I know no true Priests who are simple Ministers of Jesus Christ, only to declare and interpret his word; because every one of them abounding in their own sense, teach that which is most sutable to their inclinations. They ought to be nothing (r) but the Organs of the Holy Spirit, and it seems they are become his Masters. (s) Humane Learning and Studies have depriv'd them of the Gospel simplicity, they ascribing to themselves what appertains to God; conducting Souls by their own measures, not by the Rules of the Gospel, forasmuch as they themselves do not follow them. Some indeed speak the words of the Gospel; but (t) they do so gloze and disguise it, that no body thinks himself obliged to put it in practice. Which is very lamentable: for Jesus (u) Christ yesterday and to day is altogether the same, and will be even to the end of the world, (x) without any change or mutation. This being most true, how is it possible that any can be sav'd, while they do not follow in any thing what he has taught us? He has said; that (y) ~~he who does not deny himself~~ cannot be his Disciple; which no body does. On the contrary, every one loves himself; and yet they call themselves the Disciples of Jesus Christ! It must needs be, that the one or the other is deceiv'd. This impossibility which Jesus Christ has laid down, is it render'd possible by the authority of those Guides, who assure all the world of their Salvation, while they love themselves? This cannot be true, for Jesus Christ (z) cannot lie: but men indeed may err; especially in things wherein they have interest;

(o) Luk. 10. 16. (p) 2 Tim. 2. 15. (q) 1 Tim. 4. 6. (r) Mat. 10. 20.
(s) 1 Cor. 3. 19, 20. 2 Cor. 11. 3. (t) Ezek. 22. 26, 28. Mal. 2. 8.
(u) Heb. 13. 8. (x) Jam. 1. 17. (y) Luk. 14. 26, 27. (z) 1 Tim. 2.

for if they taught simply, that a man must deny himself, and the other points of the Gospel, they would give severe reproofs to themselves : because their lives and manners are very far from this practice, therefore they study to find out glosses, reasons, and exceptions, to the end they may find (a) means not to be oblig'd to follow and practice this holy doctrine, which (b) is repugnant to their senses. Thus every one lives in a presumption of his Salvation, without any ground ; for these men are not Saviours, and cannot save us ; but are rather Seducers, (c) of whom Jesus Christ foretold, that they should come in the last times, in which we are certainly fallen (d) at present, wherein the spirit of error does fully reign, where truth is stifled (e) ; and lying prevails.

The Second Conference.

*Of the Judgment of God : Of the Last Times ;
and of the Men of the Last Times.*

Remarking these last words, I ask'd her, if she firmly believ'd, that the last times were come : and whither the Judgment approached.

She said to me ; Believe me, Sir, there is nothing more true ; we actually live in the last times ; and the judgment is so near, that before three years I believe you will see the effects of it.

I could not be perswaded to believe this, continuing pensive and silent ; which she perceiving said,

Sir, the difficulty you find to believe these things, proceeds from the universal darkness that is now upon the earth, by which all the world is blinded, and no body sees where he goes, no more than they who liv'd during the Egyptian darkness ; (f) which was so great, that none could stir out of the place in which they were : this was nothing but the outward figure of the inward darkness in which

(a) 2 Pet. 3. 16 (b) 1 Cor. 2. 14. (c) Mat. 24. 4. (d) 1 Cor. 10. 4. (e) Psal. 12. 2, 3, 9. (f) Exod. 10. 22. 3.

men walk at present. We do not perceive, that we are fallen into the last times; nevertheless we may see by the lives of men, now that all the signs are fallen out which Jesus Christ has foretold, viz. (g) *that iniquity shall be multiplied, and Charity in many shall wax cold*; and so of the rest. Who can doubt, that this is not at present, when iniquity is so great and so universal, that there is no more faith, (h) nor law among men. (i) People study nothing but to deceive their Neighbour; the Father cannot trust his Son, nor the Son his Father; the Brother rises up against the Brother; friendship is only feign'd; business is full of deceit and fraud: We see nothing but pride and ambition reigning in the hearts of all men: Judges are without equity; Priests without sincerity; Cloysters fill'd with avarice, and the devout full of malice, which has been at all times in some particular persons; but is at present so multiply'd, that it possesses almost all men in general; and charity is not only waxt cold, but is altogether frozen, and become dead in the hearts of men: So that these signs of the last times are all fully accomplisht. Read, if you please, the Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, where he says, (l) *that in the last times there shall come men loving their own selves*, &c. You will see more clearly than the Sun all the marks and signs of the last times fulfill'd, and perfectly accomplisht. The life of men is the open book in which these truths are written, and the holy Scriptures are the equitable Judge which pronounces this sentence. Read, Sir, with attention, they will deliver you from the difficulty you find in believing this; for tho indeed they do not determine precisely the day of judgment, yet they will make you see sufficiently, that the cheif signs which must precede it do already appear.

That no body will believe this, is a most certain evidence of it; for Jesus Christ says, that (m) *it shall be as in the days of Noah, they were eating and drinking, and marrying, and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away*.

Even so is it at present; they take their recreations and pleasures, heaping up earthly treasures, building houses

(g) Math. 24. 12. (h) Psal. 119. 126. (i) Mic. 7. 2-6. (l) 2 T. m. 3. 1-6. (m) Math. 24. 37, 38, 39.

and temples, as if they were to remain here to eternity ; while all must very shortly perish. And no body will believe it, according to the prediction of Jesus Christ ; when he compares these last times with those of the universal deluge. He says in St. *Math.* 24. *it will be as in the days of Noah ; adding, when you shall see the abomination of desolation to be in the holy place, flee away.*

Do you not think, Sir, that this abomination is now in the holy place ? if Envy were lost, it might be recover'd in the Cloisters ; if Avarice were dead, it would be reviv'd by the Priests ; Vain-glory and Pride is no where so prevailing, as among the Clergy : in one word, Simony, and all other sins, abound in the place which ought to be holy.

What more sure marks would you have than those which Jesus Christ himself has declar'd to us should precede the Judgment ? if you desire to see the Stars fall from Heaven, the Sun to be darken'd, the Moon not to give her Light ; all these are nothing but material signs, which can do no harm to Souls ; but serve only for outward evidences of the wrath of God, and to the end that even insensible things may feel the terrors of that great day ; as the Rocks did, when they were rent at the death of Jesus Christ. This added nothing to his passion, nor render'd those who put him to death more criminal ; for they were nothing but insensible rocks, without souls or reason. Even so will it be as to the Stars and the other celestial bodies ; if they change colour, or suffer any other alteration, this will not be hurtful to our souls which are spiritual, and cannot receive any punishment by these visible and material Stars ; so much the rather that these signs and Stars cannot be understood but spiritually. For how could the Stars fall from Heaven, since the Mathematicians tell us, that one Star alone is seven times greater than all the Earth ? so great a thing cannot fall into one so small, for it would not be capable to contain it. And if we take the mystical sense, calling by the name of *Stars*, persons luminous in Doctrine, the Doctors and Guides, Prelates, Bishops, and all those who are plac'd in Dignities, to whom the name of *Stars* (*n*) may be appropriated, as being the Lights of the world, this sign would also have an

Present its sense accomplisht; for we see every day such persons fall from righteousness and truth, who for some worldly interest, or humane respects, fall from the truth of the Gospel, which is the true heaven of Souls, and wallow in the earth among its riches and pleasures as secular persons do. In former times how many of those were seen, who had their hearts and spirits continually towards heaven! their lives and manners did enlighten all the world, as the Stars of the Firmament; but at present they are fallen into the mire of earthly affections: So that it may be truly said, that the Stars are fallen from Heaven, and that the Sun also is become without light. For *Truth*, which is the true Sun of Righteousness, cannot any longer appear openly, it is become (o) black and hateful to all the world, who desiring to be flatter'd and prais'd (p), cannot hear the truth, because it reproves the falshood which now prevails.

These two signs of the *Sun* and of the *Stars*, appear at present in their full accomplishment in the mystical and inward sense, which is much more than if they did appear in the literal and material sense, for the reasons above-mentioned: and if the *Moon* be not as yet without light, it will be so very shortly in the mystical and perfect sense.

The *Moon*, is all transitory things, which after the manner of the Moon do encrease or diminish, according to good or bad fortune. These things will lose their light so soon as Wars shall have destroy'd and ruin'd temporal wealth. Then all that pomp and magnificence which shines in the Sanctuary will lose its splendor, and will no longer yeild any thing but (q) *blood*. Since for Gold and Silver they will cut the throats of those who are plac'd in the highest dignities; so that what shines and glitters to day in the Church, will wholly lose its lustre and light; and by this means, this Moon will be darken'd. I entreat you to read attentively the 24th Chapter of St. *Matthew*; it speaks of the present time. All the Parables do the same. I wish I had time and leisure to explain them to you; you would see as well as I, that the Judgment approaches, for all the forerunning signs are already come. People do not perceive them, for want of reflecting seriously enough on the holy Scriptures, or upon the

(o) R.v. 6. 12. (p) 2 Tim. 4. 3. (q) Rev. 6. 12.

inward life of men now adays: they amuse themselves with regarding only their outward piety, imagining that there are yet a great many good men, because they appear such: but before God all are corrupted. They resemble the Apples of *Sodom*, which appear beautiful without, and have nothing within but rottenness. This is the true symbole of the life of Christians now; which God makes me perceive abundantly by his inward light.

This fill'd me with astonishment; and desiring to understand her more clearly, I ask'd her whether there were not any good men, or true Christians in our days?

She said to me: No, Sir, THERE ARE NO TRUE CHRISTIANS UPON EARTH. There are indeed diverse persons who seem to be good men, and are really so in comparison of the wicked: they may indeed pass for Saints before men; but before God they are not true Christians; for tho' they do not act wickedly, but frequent the Sacraments, and other exercises of Devotion, yet nevertheless they have not the *LOVE OF GOD*, nor *Charity for their Neighbour*, in their hearts; much less a hatred of themselves, or a desire to embrace the Cross, Sufferings and Persecutions, to follow Jesus Christ: On the contrary, they so (*s*) love themselves, that all their designs aim at nothing but their own satisfaction, even in the most pious things.

You would be astonish'd, Sir, to see what difference there is between the sight of God, and that of men (*t*). I have been often deceiv'd my self by these seeming virtues, being perswaded that there were yet many true Christians; but having seen them tried by tribulations and contempt, they were consum'd as the chaff in the fire; and if they had been *GOLD* in Charity, Persecution would have render'd them more bright. Many souls will be deceiv'd at death, who in their life time presum'd they were true Christians, while in the sight of God they will be worse than Heathens. Such is the blindness wherein we live at present, in which no body makes a right judgment of himself, or of others; every one presuming to be sav'd without good works: whereas no works can be good (*u*) if they do not proceed from

(*r*) Ps. 12. 2. Is. 57. 1. 59. 16. Mich. 7. 2. (*s*) 2 Tim. 3. 2. (*t*) Prov. 16. 7. Lk. 16. 15. (*u*) 1 Cor. 13. 1-4.

Charity, which is at present banisht from the hearts of all men; for which cause there are no more perfect Christians upon earth, for the Christian life is all *Charity*, and the *Love of God*, which is no longer in use.

I ask'd her; How long she believ'd it is since there was no more Charity, nor true Christians upon Earth?

She answer'd: There has been no longer Charity upon earth, Sir, since Christians left the Gospel simplicity; from that time Charity began to wax cold, and when the Church would needs establish herself in pomp, riches, and magnificence; this outward splendor has utterly destroy'd the spirit of the Gospel. Studies have banisht the holy spirit, and the learning of men has stifled the wisdom of God; so that the evil has always encreast, till by the traditions of men (x), they have annull'd the Law of God, and extinguisht Charity, which is no longer known, and much less practiced in our dangerous and woful times, the danger being so much the more to be fear'd the less it is known; because no body apprehends those truths which God himself has reveal'd. They content themselves with the judgment of men, founding their Salvation upon the doctrine of the learned, who are far estrang'd (y) from the wisdom of the holy Spirit, to which even they will not yeild themselves, they lean so much upon their own judgment. *These are blind (z) who lead the blind, and both together shall fall into the ditch;* according to the saying of Jesus Christ.

Who with just reason has call'd these last times *dangerous* (a); because under a pretext of Piety and Religion men are led to damnation. Simple People believing that they hear God, when they hear those Guides who do very often teach the doctrine of Devils. For if you observe what questions and disputes are now form'd in the Church, you will find that they make debates of things, which humane malice could not raise. They must needs have come from the bottom of Hell. They maintain that it is almost lawful to commit all sorts of sins without offending God; that one may swear falsely without sinning; and so of the rest, which you may better know than I; for I am struck with so much horror when I hear such

(x) Math. 15. 3-9. (y) 1 Cor. 3. 18, 19, 20. (z) Math. 15. 14.
(a) 2 Tim. 3. 1.

things, that I was never desirous to be acquainted with these black villanies, they are grown to such a height, that they maintain no body is oblig'd to love God, which overturns (b) the first and the greatest Commandment, and is repugnant to nature itself; which carries in it this obligation of loving a God, of whom it holds its being, and all things. Do you not think, Sir, that this Doctrine is of Antichrist, since it contradicts the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and the Commandment which God gave to man from the beginning of the world, and in all times, and all ages? Nevertheless, they preach this publickly, with many other abominations; and many believe that these are truths, because they are advanc'd by learned persons, and such as are plac'd in Ecclesiastical Authority and Dignities, who ought to be the true Members of the holy Church. Pardon me, Sir, that I digress from the answer, which I should have made to your demand. It is because a sensible regret transports me, and makes me exceed, when I think upon the reasons, why there are no more true Christians.

The Third Conference.

The Means by which Christianity began to decay from the Time of the Apostles, and has continu'd so to do to such a degree, that at present there are no true Christians upon Earth, viz.

1. The Admission of false Brethren.
2. Appropriation.
3. Debates.
4. Partialities.
5. Men of Learning.
6. Disputes.
7. The Victory of the Devil.

I Reply'd to her; That she could not offend me in this: On the contrary, I was very curious to understand more clearly, the causes and reasons, why there were no longer any true Christians on Earth.

(b) Math. 22. 37, 38.

She said : Sir, let us sit down here, I will give you a particular account of the original, progress, and end of this calamity.

As soon as the first Christians began to grow remiss, the Devil, like a strange Shepherd, slipt into the Sheeptold of J. Christ, where he led astray many of his Sheep, who by little and little forsook their true Shepherd, turning away from Righteousness and Truth to follow Iniquity and Lies. The Evangelical Poverty is condemn'd by them; sufferings are become insupportable to them; humility is disdain'd. In fine, they would no longer hear the voice of their lawful Shepherd, whose word serv'd for the nourishment of their souls; from that time Antichrist began his Reign, and has ever since augmented his Power. He could not endure, that Jesus Christ had brought the word unto men, by following of which, they might be to all Eternity in the Glory of the blessed, from which he had been chac'd and banisht for all Eternity. Therefore he endeavours to make war against this word, that he might efface it out of the memory of men, and might thereby hinder their coming to the Kingdom of Heaven. He did not tempt them by evil deeds, or by wicked actions, but by tricks and flights, covering his malice under the cloak of piety and reason.

First, he incites the wicked, his Adherents, to list themselves into the Christian Life, (c) that Tares might be sown among the good grain. He thrusts in (d) many false brethren among the true, that he might by them do his work covertly, and under a pretext of piety; for otherwise he would not have been able to gain any thing upon the hearts of those first Christians, who being fill'd with the holy Spirit, and burning with the fire of the Love of God, he could not have catcht them with evil things, or such as had an appearance of evil.

He multiplies therefore first the number of Christians so exceedingly, that every one judg'd, it was impossible to live any more in common. He moves by humane reason, the hearts of the most perfect to yield to a separation, and to consent that every one should possess his own particular wealth, without forgetting in the mean time Charity, which every one should preserve in his

(c) *Math.* 13. 24. (d) *Act.* 20. 29, 30. 2 *Cor.* 11. 13.

heart, to supply the necessities of their brethren. Thus this old Serpent has always colour'd his inventions with piety and reasons.

But no sooner did every one begin to have *thine and mine*, than the brother is forgotten (e), and instead of bringing their portion in common, each one began to cheat, as to his own particular; from hence came an exclusion, and exception of persons; and instead of inviting to their table the poor, (f) as J. Christ had taught, that they might have their reward in Heaven; they invited their friends, and those who had the conveniency to invite them again. By which Charity was greatly diminish'd, and Avarice began to gain upon their hearts, every one seeking their own interest. As soon as the Devil had this door open, whereby to enter into the Church of J. Christ, he began to stir up therein debates (g) and dissensions, which were contrary unto the peace which J. Christ had always taught, saying, (h) *I give you my peace, my peace I leave you*; and elsewhere, (i) *Love one another: by this shall it be known that you are my Disciples*.

The Devil also stifled these Doctrines from the beginning; for one said, (l) *I am of Paul*, and another, *I am of Apollo*; thus vices encreas'd, and Charity was less'n'd. Behold from what time began no longer true Christians to be found; in process of time yet less: and in the end, which is now, there are none. This would be too long to deduce to you in particular. You may, Sir, conceive the rest sufficiently.

I told her; That my conception could not reach so far; that she must declare to me the whole: so much the rather that she had promis'd to do it. That it was neither good nor honest to be wanting to her promise, since I would willingly hear it; and the affair did require it. That the Glory of God, and my own particular salvation was concern'd in it.

She said: Seeing it is so, Sir, I will proceed; but be not you weary if the discourse be long: Many things cannot be said in a little time. Be you as attentive to hear, as I shall be to declare it. These are excellent Truths, which will open your understanding, and that of all

(e) Rev. 2. 4. (f) Luk. 14. 12, 13 (g) 1 Cor. 6. 1-8. (h) Job. 14. 32. (i) Job. 13. 34, 35 (l) 1 Cor. 1. 12.

persons capable of reason. When therefore those first Christians became thus remiss, and the Devil had made a breach upon the hearts of the most part, to oppose the Doctrine of J. Christ, some of those who were not yet altogether perverted, set themselves to make some reformation in the Church, lest it should become more corrupt, for many errors and Sects had crept into it, every one desiring to believe and practice after his own mode. This gave beginning to all sorts of Heresies: for as long as the union of true Christians did last, (m) all were but *one heart, and one will in J. Christ*; living all under the Gospel simplicity. But when once they assembled learned Men, and introduc'd Schools, there was nothing to be seen but disputes and controversies. The Sciences have brought in so many questions little necessary to Salvation, that it had been more desirable they had never been introduc'd: for instead of putting an end to errors, they have rather raised new ones. How many Heresies have proceeded from the learned of the Church? a *Calvin*, a *Luther* in our time, and so many others before.

Truly, Sir, in thinking to reform the Church by the learned, they have rather deformed it; the doctrine of Jesus requiring rather humility of heart, than great Philosophy: for the simplicity of the Gospel has in it more true wisdom (n), than all the Doctors of the world can acquire in all the Schools of the Universities. The Learning of Men has stifled the Wisdom of the holy Spirit; and since they have chosen the learned unto the Helm of the Church, they have thrust the Saints from it: seeing none have since that been admitted into the Government and Authority of the Church but the great men and the learned: the little ones (o) to whom Jesus Christ says, *he gives his Grace*, have been rejected and render'd useless. Hereby in process of time there have been so few true Christians, the number of which has always diminish'd, according as the learning of men has multiplied.

For if those learned men had observ'd and taught the Doctrine of the Gospel simply as it is set down, as the Apostles did, the Church had continu'd in

(m) *Act* 4. 32. (n) *Pf.* 119. 98, 99, 100, 104, 130. (o) *Math.* 4. 23. 1 *Pet.* 5. 5.

the flower of its youth ; but since they would needs polish and varnish it with humane doctrines, they have quite disfigur'd it. Its beautiful countenance had no need of ornament. Nothing can amend the work of God, but may indeed spoil it, as they have done by so many various and unprofitable questions, as concerning Grace, Free-will, the immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and so many other things little necessary to our Salvation, with so many new ways and devotions to be sav'd ; so many cases about sins, so many circumstances concerning virtues, which serve rather to hinder than advance them. It were better to study not to sin, than to know its degrees. It is far better to walk suitably to the Grace of God, than to study to know how he gives it to us ; and to have virtue and devotion, than to learn so many means to attain to it. There is no doubt but all these buildings made with mens hands have shaken the Edifice of the Church of Christ, which the Spirit of God had built by the ministry of the same J. Christ. Men, who are wholly ignorant, would needs correct and reform the work of God, which was so perfect and accomplished ; by which they have ruin'd themselves, and all like unto them.

I entreated, that she would explain her mind a little more at length concerning this question, and tell me in order, if it was not expedient to oppose the errors which had crept in amidst the holy doctrine of Jesus Christ ? If it was not needful to call the learned, that they might overcome by reasons and arguments those false brethren, who set themselves directly to oppose that doctrine, to the end they might stifle and blast it, even in its Cradle ?

She answers: Truly, Sir, it had been much better to have oppos'd those errors by despising them, than by disputing against them ; because these disputes have taught many the errors which they would have been ignorant of, who might have continu'd in their evangelical simplicity ; whereas these disputes have made many grow remiss by the same errors, which being spread have captivated weak minds. It had been far better to have rejected and cut off those erroneous persons, than to maintain their opinion by disputes. There was no need to fear, that the Doctrine of Jesus Christ would have been sunk by all the errors that could be rais'd up against it,
seeing

seeing its Author has promised (p) that it shall never per-
 ish, however it be oppos'd and attack'd; which we see
 by experience: For tho the Devil and his Adherents,
 have always endeavour'd to obscure and defile this holy
 Doctrine, yet it has continu'd in writing pure and entire
 in our hands to this day, and will continue so even to
 the end of the world. This is the greatest miracle that
 God has done upon earth, after men have invented so
 many glosses and opinions to contradict it, and the life and
 manners even of those, who are call'd the People of God,
 are so different from this Doctrine, that yet notwith-
 standing it subsists in its integrity, in the hands and power
 of those who raze out, and efface it by their manners and
 actions. If it were not upheld by miracles, how often
 would it have been stifled by the wisdom of the learned,
 who (if it were in their power) would never suffer a Do-
 ctrine which so directly reproves their lives and manners.
 In which God shews his almighty power, that all men
 who shall be born upon the earth, may have their re-
 course to this fountain of living water, which is the
 Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and that no body may pretend
 ignorance, under pretext that there are different, or
 new doctrines and errors; for he who has a desire to
 search, has also the means to find the real truth, written
 in the holy Gospel, or the rest of the holy Scriptures.
 It was not therefore necessary to maintain it by so many
 disputes, which Jesus Christ never (q) taught us, either
 by word, or by deed. Men could not destroy that which
 God would build. It had been more expedient to
 strengthen and comfort the faithful, than to dispute a-
 gainst the erroneous who were raised up only by the De-
 vil: they would have perished of themselves; for all
 that is nor built by God, shall be destroyed. A small
 number of faithful Believers were far better than so great
 a multitude of Christians in appearance, who do nothing
 but debate and dispute without possessing true living
 faith. The rotten members corrupt those which are yet
 sound. The (r) Devil is never sooner overcome, than
 by despising him, for then he knows not how to take
 hold of the good; but disputes and debates furnish him
 with diverse weapons to attack and overcome them (s).

(p) *Math.* 16. 18 (q) *Math.* 12. 19. (r) *Jam.* 4. 7. (s) *Jam.* 3.
 14. 15, 16. The

The Fourth Conference.

Of the qualities and ways of acting which ought to have been in the Guides of the Church, to maintain it in its good estate against all Enemies; and that they might not make way for the Spirit of Anti-christ, as they have done.

I Admired all this so powerful discourse, desiring always to hear more. I ask'd her how she conceiv'd, that the Saints were thrust from the Government of the Church, when the learned undertook it; since many learned and great Doctors have been canoniz'd Saints, and held for such.

She said: Sir, it is very rare to find a learned Saint, or at least one who becomes holy by learning; for all humane wisdom is foolishness before God. All the Saints are certainly wise, but few learned men are Saints: I do not mean, that there have not been some Saints who were engag'd in the Government of the Church, as *St. Ambrose*, *St. Augustin*, and others: but I cannot believe that a body is sound, when it hath the Leprosy in any of its members (t). The whole body of the Church was sound, when to be an Apostle, or Minister of the Church, 'twas only requir'd to embrace an evangelical life; for all the rotten members were cut off from it, or corrected, or indeed they withdrew of themselves, not being able to endure so great a sanctity, that reprov'd them in all their manners. *St. Paul* (u) forbids Christians so much as to eat with sinners; behold how he cuts off the rotten members: and elsewhere it is said, (x) *If thy brother will not believe the Church, let him be unto thee as a Heathen*. In many places of Scripture you will find this rejection. *St. Peter* (y) makes *Ananias* and *Saphira* fall dead at his feet for their lying. *St. Paul* (z) delivers over to the

(t) *Levit.* 13. 2, 3. (u) *1 Cor.* 5. 11. (x) *Mat.* 18. 17. (y) *Act.* 5. 58. (z) *1 Cor.* 5. 3, 4, 5.

Devil the *Corinthian*; besides so many others, who have been chastized for not having continu'd faithful observers of the Law of the Gospel. Others have withdrawn of themselves, as *Judas* (a) to go and hang himself: and a great many others who withdrawing themselves, gave occasion to Jesus Christ to ask the other Disciples, (b) *If they would go also?* to which they reply'd; *and whither shall we go Lord? thou hast the words of eternal life.* These three means were capable of upholding the holy Church in its Integrity and Holiness, as Jesus Christ had establish'd it; and did himself observe these rules, that is, that the erroneous should be rejected and despis'd, or else corrected for their errors; or otherwise permitted to go out, and withdraw themselves: but these new Doctors have found out, as a more perfect mean for the upholding of the Church, to admit only the wise and learned to the government of it, that the erroneous might be oppos'd, and overcome by disputes. Is the invention and wise foresight of these men, more perfect than the ordinance and doing of God? Can that eternal wisdom be ignorant, that Learning was necessary for the government of his Church? Was it necessary that men should change, reform, or perfect what Jesus Christ had establish'd, to wit, that the government of his Church should appertain to those, who have given evidence of the love they bear him? for this cause he puts the question to *St. Peter* thrice (c), to know if he lov'd him, before he made him head of his Church. On the contrary, men are more inquisitive to know, if any Minister of the Church be great and learned, than if he love God. This is a renverlement of spirit which has seiz'd upon men, since they would needs be govern'd by the wise of the world, and they have despis'd the holy simplicity of the Gospel. This mischief could not be brought in by humane frailty; it must needs proceed from the malice of the Devil. Man indeed thro frailty, might backslide, and follow Jesus Christ at a little farther distance than he had taught him; but could not arrive to such an excess of wickedness, as directly to oppose, and despise his doctrine and practice. This must needs come from that spirit of error, who from the beginning entred into the

(a) *Math.* 27. 5. (b) *Joh.* 6. 66, 67. (c) *Joh.* 21. 15, 16, 17.

the Church, to oppose Christ, and is therefore justly called *ANTICHRIST*. He has so cunningly masqu'd and disguis'd his errors with piety and reason, that they have been follow'd, notwithstanding there have been at diverse times holy persons in the government of the Church.

The Fifth Conference.

Of Antichrist; and how he rules every where in Spirit.

I Begg'd she would tell me, whom, she understood to be Antichrist; and how he could introduce himself into the Church in its beginning, since it appears from the holy Scriptures, that he is to come only towards the end of the world, and is called, the man of sin, the son of perdition, (d) and is not to reign but three years and a half.

She said: I perceive, Sir, that you take for Antichrist a humane body, which is to be born by the operation of the Devil. I believe, that this will fall out at the end of the world, yea that he is already born: but I make very small reckoning of this visible and bodily Antichrist, because he can seduce none, but those who desire to be so. He shall be known for a wicked one, because he will deal harshly with those who yield obedience to him; which will occasion Martyrs, and make many good men to be sav'd, by the resistance they will make against him. These evils are not terrible but to the faint-hearted, who are not train'd up to sufferings: but I reckon this invisible and spiritual Antichrist, of whom I have spoken to you, to be far more pernicious; because he seduceth the well-meaning, under the appearance of a false good: this is much more to be fear'd. The evil which is manifest, is easie to be avoided by those who hate it; but the evil which is cover'd with piety and holiness, is insensibly follow'd by those who are good, and love piety, who would never follow Antichrist discover'd, nor the evil which they knew to be such.

(d) 2 Thes 2. 5.

I told her ; that I had never heard of this spiritual Antichrist ; that I would willingly know who he is, and what difference there is between him who is to come in the flesh, towards the end of the world, and him who crept into the Church from its beginning.

She answer'd : Sir, this Antichrist is the Devil, who from the creation of the world made war against men, that he might make them forsake God, and their own Salvation ; for these ends he made *Eve* and *Adam* fall into sin, he tempted *Cain* to kill his brother *Abel*, and is the Author of all the other evils and sins which have since come upon the earth. This Devil has always led men to do evil ; from this he is call'd (e) *the Old Serpent*, because he has shed his infernal venom upon the earth from the beginning of the world. But since he knew that God so lov'd the world, that he has sent his Son to instruct and save it, he has redoubled his rage against men, and by new subtilties has endeavour'd to hinder their Salvation, that with himself he might draw them into his own miserable wretched Condemnation. But perceiving, that the word of God was sent to them from heaven, not by voices, thunders, or burning bushes, but by a sensible and visible body, which the same God had taken for this end, that he might teach them palpably by an Organ, like to their humane nature : the Devil perceiving, that he could not any longer have such hold of men, because of the vertue of that word which was able to create the universe, he deviseth to appear like the Son of God ; and after the manner of apes endeavour to imitate his actions, covering himself with Sheeps skins, tho he be the true ravenous Wolf. He slipt from the very beginning into the Church which Jesus Christ was going to build, that he might oppose and contradict his word under pious pretexts, and covered his malice with hypocrisie, that he might the better contradict and oppose the doctrine of Jesus Christ ; and from thence he has truly born the name of Antichrist, and there never will be any other Antichrist, but this same Devil, who was formerly call'd the Old Serpent. There is no distinction between him, who slipt into the Church in its beginning, and him who shall be incarnated towards the

end of the world : for it is always the same Devil, who only takes different methods, that he may the better decoy men, according to the various occurrences of time. He began his Reign from the birth of the Holy Church, and has always gradually advanc'd it, by continuing still to oppose the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, till he has effac'd it out of the memory, almost of all men, which we may perceive in this age, wherein the Doctrine of Jesus Christ is no more in use, than if it had never been brought into the world, which makes me believe, that he is now born, since he has full dominion over the hearts of men, who instead of persevering in the Doctrine of the Apostles, have insensibly follow'd the Doctrine of this Devil, and of *Christians*, are become *Antichristians* : for who does not see at present, that Wars, Discords, and Dissentions, reign among Christians, instead of the *Peace* (f) which Jesus Christ establish'd ? It may indeed be said that there is not any longer one stone left upon another of the true Temple : that is to say, that there are not any longer two Christian Souls united in the same heart and the same will in Jesus Christ : and instead of that (g) *Communion of Goods*, which Jesus Christ brought into his Church, there is nothing to be seen in it but self-interest, and self-seeking, without any care for our Neighbour. As for the (h) *Mutual Charity* of loving our Neighbour as our selves, it is so despised, that he who should put it in practice would be scoff'd at by all Christians ; much more he who should choose (i) *the last place*, or who should take less (l) when he might have more : To (m) *give to him who would take from us*, or indeed (n) *to hold up the cheek to receive a blow*, would be reckon'd a great folly among the Christians of this age, who will scarce suffer an offensive word without resenting it, or avenging themselves. Who is there (o) that *takes up the Cross to follow Jesus Christ*, since every one avoids sufferings as much as he can, and instead of the Cross takes all Contentments agreeable to his senses, as far as they are lawful and permitted ? And so of all the rest of the Doctrines of Jesus Christ, nobody studies to put them in practice ; on the contrary,

(f) *Joh.* 14. 27. (g) *Act.* 2. 44. 4. 32. 34. (h) *Joh.* 13. 34. 35.
 (i) *Luke* 14. 10. (l) *Phil.* 2. 5-8. *Hib.* 11. 25, 26. (m) *Math.* 5. 40.
 (n) *ibid.* 5. 39. (o) *Math.* 26. 24.

every one resists them, and does the quite contrary, without considering, that all that is against Christ is certainly *Antichrist*. And as it is not necessary for Salvation, that all Christians should see the carnal body of Jesus Christ, to render them his true Disciples it is enough that they know and follow his Doctrine; even so to be the followers of the Devil it is not necessary that they see this Antichrist in the flesh; it is enough that they follow his doctrine, which is much more hurtful to Souls, than that incarnate Devil can be unto Bodies: therefore the furious is not so much to be dreaded, as the crafty and concealed; he can but wound or kill the Body by his fury, but this wounds and kills Souls by cheats and delusions.

I could not but acknowledge such clear and evident truths, neither had I more than one doubt to propose about them, viz. whether this Antichrist in the flesh was already born; which being supposed, how he could make any suffer Martyrdom, and occasion the salvation of many of those who should resist him, seeing she believed that all Christians were at present become Antichristian; so that they could not be disposed for Martyrdom, nor for resisting of him, whom they loved and followed?

She said, Sir, I cannot doubt that this Antichrist in the flesh is born already, for the wickedness of the world is risen to the highest degree that it can come to, and the Devil has gain'd an inward dominion over the hearts of all men: not that wickedness is manifestly at the highest degree in the judgment of men, for it will appear more clearly when they shall commit all sort of sins publickly, without being afraid of any; the evil will seem then greater, but it will be less in the sight of God, for it will then be no more accompanied and disguised with Hypocrisie, as it is at present: The Devil having gain'd the hearts of ill men, will remain no longer conceal'd. He is desirous to reign publickly and openly as soon as he can for his greater Glory. As long as there were here and there some good Souls, he kept himself hid, to the end he might gain them: but at present he can so well disguise his malice, that all serve him, the wicked with good will as his hired Servants, and the good serve him by constraint as his Slaves. From hence I infer, that the time of his Reign is come, and that he will appear very shortly visibly in the flesh.

And

And to satisfy the second Doubt proposed, viz. how there shall be Martyrs of Jesus Christ, and of those who shall obtain Salvation by the Persecutions of this discovered Antichrist; this shall be an effect of the last Mercy of God, who will yet once send his Light into the world, according to his promise, (p) *That the light shall arise in darkness, and that the darkness shall be as noon day.* That is to say, that in this time of darkness, in which we live at present, wherein the Truth is not any longer discern'd from Lies, Faithfulness from Deceit, nor Righteousness from Iniquity, that God will make his Light to arise in this Darkness, and that those who shall receive it shall open their eyes, and see the blindness of their understanding, and reject the spirit of error into which they were fallen thro the false persuasions of this invisible Antichrist, and shall embrace the spirit of truth, which is the Doctrine of Jesus Christ; and by this means dispose themselves to Martyrdom, and to saving sufferings in the Quarrel of Jesus Christ: for many are now detain'd the Slaves of the Devil thro ignorance and inadvertency, believing even that they follow Jesus Christ, when they follow this strange Shepherd thro his delusions.

I thought it impossible to believe, that the Devil had dominion over the hearts of all men, because I knew many who make profession of being good men, who in effect are observ'd to addict themselves to pious and religious works, exercising themselves in both publick and private Devotions, employing themselves according to their Callings in succouring their Neighbour, and owning the quarrel of good men, in making peace and agreement between those who have quarrels and debates.

She said; Sir, it is by these works which seem good and pious, that the Devil deceives the good, and renders them his Slaves, making them to do his will without their perceiving it. It is for this reason our times may well be called dangerous, because the darkness is so thick as that good is not any longer discern'd from evil. Those are esteem'd good men who do often frequent the Churches and Sacraments, and are present at the publick Solemnities; and they who do so, believe themselves to be good men, and to live well: but believe me, Sir, if this be not done in the true Spirit of Christianity, these are all but

(p) U. 53. 10.

amusements: for the life of a Christian is an (q) *inward and spiritual Life*, consisting in the *LOVE* and Respect we owe to God, and *CHARITY* to our Neighbour for God. This Love is an inward Passion of our Soul which is known to none but God himself, as also this Charity for our Neighbour. These inward passions are sometimes discover'd outwardly, by external operations, as to suffer willingly for him whom we love, to be subject in all things to his will, to honour him with all our power; by these solid vertues it is discover'd if we be good men, not by making a profession of being so: for this profession of being good proceeds often from a presumption of our Salvation, which is a sin against the Holy Ghost. A sinner who knows his sin, is often a better man than this presumptuous person.

The Sixth Conference.

How the outward worship of God, and the outward works of Charity towards our Neighbour, are corrupted by the Devil: And from whence this Power proceeds.

I Desir'd to be satisfy'd concerning all these points of good works which I had observ'd to be yet in use among those who profess to be good men, to see whither the Devil would produce such operations in his Adherents. I ask'd her first, If it was not a good work to go often to the Church, or to its Solemnities?

She answer'd: It is very good to go to Church to hear the Word of God, since Jesus Christ himself went thither to teach it; for there is distributed (or at least ought to be) that word which gives food or nourishment to the souls of the faithful. But I pray you, Sir, says she, reflect a little seriously with me on the way of going to Church, and of teaching the Word of God there which is now observ'd, and see if you will not be oblig'd to confess,

(q) *Joh. 4. 23, 25. Rom. 8. 5-9. 12. 2. Eph. 4. 23.*

tha t

that by what is now done in Churches, the Devil receives much more honour than God: therefore he incites his Adherents to go thither often, and the Ministers to perform the Solemnities there frequently. They go to Church out of custom, and being there, they behave themselves even as they do in profane places. The Solemnities there are so vain, that they serve rather to satisfy the senses than to move devotion. Among a thousand persons who follow Processions, you will scarce find one who has his heart lifted up to God!

Sermons are made more out of vanity, and heard more out of curiosity, than to profit by them. Behold the Theater of the World at present, judge now, whither all these things can pass for good works in the sight of God, and if the Devil has not ground to excite them to these actions, from whence he derives so much his advantages. When once he could persuade men, that a Christian Life consists in outward actions, he perverted all the good; so that they do rather follow him than Jesus Christ, because these visible and outward things make a stronger impression on the natural senses, than those spiritual things which Jesus Christ has taught and commanded us.

I felt in my soul that this was true; but desiring to learn more, I said to her; that for those who apply themselves to their Neighbours, as to visit the poor and the sick, to own the quarrel of the good, to quiet and appease strife and contentions; that these works could not come from the suggestion of the Devil.

She reply'd: All these things are good, if they were done in the spirit of Charity, and purely for the Love of God; but that this was so rare, that she had not as yet found so much as one person in the world, who perform'd these works purely for God: That there was thro all a mixture either of vain-glory, or of self-satisfaction, or of respect to the creatures, whereby the Devil could lay hold on them, and draw his advantages from them, tho the things were good in themselves. That he might indeed incite them to visit the poor and the sick, out of some natural satisfaction; and also to assist the good, and to pacify quarrels and contentions; all this may be by the inducement of the Devil: who seeing a person desirous to please God, he will endeavour to divert him by good external actions, which he will cause him to multiply in such sort, as that they shall leave him neither leisure, nor

rest, and recollection to think on the inward life which a true Christian ought to put in practice. The Devil will have profit enough by diverting thus a soul from its own Salvation, in permitting them to do good to others as to the body or temporal things, which usually bring no glory to God, but serve for humane conveniencies; and thus he gains all the good, who not being aware of all his artifices, suffer themselves to be led by this Enemy at his pleasure, (without knowing him) under the colour of a seeming good; for otherwile he could not deceive them, nor gain them to himself; as he has done all the world.

I trembled to hear such severe discourse; which nevertheless seem'd to me to be true, for my understanding was open'd by her words. I took the boldness to ask her, how it was possible that God should give so much power to the Devil; and how his Goodness could permit the good to be thus seduc'd and deceiv'd by this Enemy.

She resolutely said: Sir, it is not God who gives this power to the Devil, but our sins themselves make him so powerful. The Devil is as a chain'd Dog, who can go no farther than we lengthen the chain to him, and (r) cannot bite us if we do not approach him. (s) God has given us power over the Devil, and has not given the Devil power over us; for he can never do an evil thing, and it would be a great evil, if he had given the Devil power to hurt men. He will permit him indeed (that we may be tried and purg'd) to tempt and wound our body; but he can never take hold of our soul without our consent. 'Tis very ill done to utter this Calumny of God, that he permits the Devil to hinder our Salvation. This is for want of light; for the Devil cannot seduce us if we continue faithful to God. We are his Children, and the Devil is his Enemy: if he has seduc'd all Christians, as I was saying, it is thro' their fault. They are not ignorant that these changes and innovations cannot come from God, who never changes; and tho' these deceits of the Devil are done under a pretext of good, yet they may abundantly see, that they are not conformable to what Jesus Christ has taught us. It is therefore our own fault, when the Devil deceives us, since we do not persevere in the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, which is always to be found,

(r) Jam. 4. 7. (s) Luke 10. 18, 19, 20.

if we had a sincere desire to search after it. Does God act against his goodness when he permits us to fall into the error which we will needs follow? it would be rather against his Justice if he should hinder us from it, after that he has given us a free will, and a free choice.

The Seventh Conference.

That God has not forsaken men, but men have forsaken God, and resisted his grace, which he distributes impartially.

I Said to her: Since our Darkness is so great, it is plain that God has forsaken us.

She reply'd: Hold, Sir, God never forsakes any, but he suffers (u) us to forsake him, when such is our will. If we are fallen into so great darkness, it is our own fault only; because we have left Jesus Christ, who is (x) the true Light of the World. The farther we are estrang'd from him, our darkness is still the greater. We have loved (y) darkness more than light: by this means we have forsaken God to follow the Devil, under whose slavery we groan at present of our own choice and will. For could God have done more than he has done to save us? could he have instructed us more plainly? there must have been something above God to do more for us, seeing that he is not content to send us his Servants and holy Prophets to enlighten us, but he is come himself to teach us in particular, what we ought to do and avoid, how we ought to speak, walk, sit, and perform all the rest of our actions so familiarly, that no Christian can be ignorant how to work out their Salvation; and if they have abandon'd all these benefits of their Lord, to follow the spirit of error, it is no wonder that they are fallen into darkness, and the power of their Enemy; for which they ought to blame themselves, and smite the breast with regret and penitence, if peradventure they may obtain

(t) Job 10. 3. Ps. 133. 8. (u) Ps. 81. 13. Zach. 11. 12. Job. 6. 66, 67. (x) Job, 8. 12. 12. 35, 25. (y) Jon 3. 19.

pardon for so great an ingratitude, instead of making God the Author of our misery, and saying blasphemously, that God has abandon'd them, of which you also doubt.

I told her ; that I should be sorry to blaspheme against God, or suspect that he might do evil ; but that it is usual, when we see any fall into the Extremity of sin, to say, that he is forsaken of God.

To which she reply d : This is very ill said, Sir. It is an ill explain d phrase, for God (z) never forsakes the work of his own hands : we appertain to him in all respects, because he created us, he maintains us, and we have no good thing but what we have receiv'd from him ; and if he forsook us, we should fall into the *Nothing* from whence he has taken us. A Father, or a Mother, who have debauch'd Children, cannot forsake them, nor hinder them from being theirs : but they may let them wander after their own wills, when they will not follow the instructions of their Father, nor yield obedience to him. They cease not notwithstanding to be their Children, which would appear evidently, if they should repent of their debauchery, and return to a submission to their Father. They would then see, how much their true Father loves them ; (a) which appears in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. God is infinitely more good (b) than those evil natural Fathers : How then could he forsake his Children whom he has so much lov'd ? People deceive themselves in many things, Sir, concerning the works of God. I know not how he suffers so long the reproaches and blasphemies which men utter against him every moment. They say sometimes, *God chastiseth me* ; and if we examine it narrowly, they are our sins which are the tormentors of our soul and of our body. A wicked man will say, *I have not receiv'd grace from God to do well* : and if he would search narrowly his Conscience, he will find, that he has resisted and oppos'd grace (d). Some say, *My grace is not strong enough to make me abstain from sin* ; and another will say, *If God would give me his grace I should be holy*. All this is spoken, to lay the blame on God of our sins and miseries, and to excuse our selves ; and thus to make God pass for unjust, and a partial respecter of those

(z) Ps. 138. 8. Wisd. 11. 24, 25, 26. (a) Luk. 15. 11. (b) Mat. 7. 11.
(c) Psal. 106. 43. Jer. 2. 19. (d) Prov. 1. 24, 25.

to whom he gives his grace; and also cruel in denying it to whom he pleases. Thus they look upon God as a person subject to diverse passions of love and hatred, of good or ill will. Truly, Sir, I bewail so great a blindness among men. How can they make a right judgment of their own concupiscence, or of their Neighbour, when they make such unjust ones of God himself? and notwithstanding think they judge rightly, because the learned judge so; yea they would even think they sinned, or did evil, in believing the contrary; because this invisible Antichrist has instill'd these sentiments into the mind of the learned, that they may never attain to the knowledge of the Righteousness, Goodness, and Mercy of God; and that they may amuse (e) themselves, in disputing about questions which are not necessary to our Salvation, but serve rather to offend him, making our selves Judges of his works, debating about his designs. This is one of the reasons for which I blame all those studies in the Church of God, being perswaded that they have brought many errors into it, and wishing always that it had continu'd (f) in the Gospel simplicity, as in the times of the Apostles, and Disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Eighth Conference.

Of the Grace of God, how it is given us; and of the Difficulty of Conversion.

HAVING observ'd, that she spoke of the matters of Grace, concerning which there had arisen so many Controversies in the Church, of which she had hinted something already in the former Conferences: I ask'd her what she believ'd concerning Grace; and if the opinion of St. Augustin and his Successors, was not better in holding, that all Grace comes from, and depends upon God alone; than the opinion of some others, who hold, that Man may have Grace as often as he desires it?

To which she reply'd: I fear, Sir, I shall not say the

(e) 1 Tim. 6. 4, 5. (f) 2 Cor. 11. 3.

things which are most agreeable to you, for it seems to me you have some interest in this dispute. But since I have promis'd to answer all your questions, I shall do it truly and in simplicity, according to my measure of light, without respect of persons, confiding in your goodness, that you will pardon the freedom which I must use in this discourse. As to the first Question, *Whether the opinion of St. Augustin and his Followers, is better than that of his Adversaries in this matter?*

I hold (comparing the one with the other) that that of St. *Augustin* is the better, or to speak more properly, the less dangerous, because the design of it seems to be, to persuade us, that all grace comes immediately from God, that we may presume nothing of our selves; whereas the contrary opinion rather incites man to attribute grace to himself, as if it depended on his own will, which would not excite in us so much humility as the first persuasion, which for this reason is less dangerous. But I believe the minds of neither of these Doctors were sufficiently purify'd to perceive clearly the truth of this question; and that their Understandings were not free of the Ideas of their acquired Learning for receiving of this Light of Grace, which is not receiv'd but by the same Grace, which is obscured when our own sense is in the least mixt with it. It is necessary (g) that all the faculties of our soul should be still that we may receive the pure light of the holy Spirit.

And to answer, as to what I believe concerning Grace; I will tell you, Sir, it comes immediately from God (h), without any merit or co-operation of ours; for we cannot merit nor co-operate before we have a being. Nothing is not capable of being able to desire or co-operate with Grace: It must needs be given us thro the sole mercy of God, as it was in creating us, and drawing us out of Nothing. It was his will and pleasure to create us after his own Image and Likeness, and to make us Deities depending upon him, that (i) *he might take his delight with us*. The Center (l) of our Soul being the place of his Residence. He has adorned (m) us with all the Graces that might make us love him; and whereas Love cannot

(g) Ps. 4. 5. (h) Rom. 11. 6. (i) Prov. 8. 31, (l) 4. 23. 23. 26.
(m) 2 Pet. 1. 3, 4.

be perfect and accomplisht, unless the beloved give their free consent to the Lover; therefore he (u) created us altogether free to consent to that Love, for he would not have our consent thro (o) force nor out of necessity, but thro a pure desire of good will on his side. Therefore he created us a kind of creatures wholly free, and gave us all the graces (p) requisite for his Love; and this out of his sole goodness and mercy, without any co-operation of ours. But instead of applying so many graces so freely bestow'd upon us, to love him, we have made use of them to offend him. Nevertheless, this was not capable of making God change the Love which he bare to his creatures, or to take from them the Graces which he had already bestow'd upon them. He continues unchangeable in his benefits, and could not repent (q) of having adorn'd man with so many Graces, which he continues to give, even after his sin. Seeing they were not bestow'd on him for his merits, neither are they taken away from him for his demerits; for God has no need of man: (r) if he be righteous or wicked, it is for himself: but God respecting always himself, imparts still the influences of grace to the wicked: (s), as the Sun sends his Beams on the Dunghil, as well as on the Diamonds: these different objects not being able to alter or change him. Even so man receives always grace from God on his part, (r) but it is not always operative because of the hinderances which sin raises against it; for if God did not continually give his grace to man he could not subsist.

We see by experience, that the wicked has all things necessary for his life, as well as the righteous, tho the one employs them to bless God, and the other to curse him. The Sun shines upon the wicked, as well as upon the good, without exception of persons.

The grace of God is given to every one, tho they use it differently. Nevertheless, we cannot attribute to God, the (u) want of his grace, but to our own wickedness, which opposes it. Grace (x) therefore comes immediately from God, and nothing comes from man but sin only,

(n) Eccles. 15. 14-17. (o) Psal. 110. 3. 1 Chron. 29. 1. Jer. 30. 21. Joh. 6. 67. (p) Is. 5. 2, &c. (q) Rom. 11. 29. (r) Job 35. 5, 6. (s) Math. 5. 44, 45. (t) 2 Cor. 6. 1. (u) Is. 5. 3, 4. (x) Eph. 2. 8, 9.

which (j) hinders the operation of this grace, and renders him unable to co-operate with it, not being able to enjoy grace and sin both together.

I ask'd her: If sinners might recover Grace as oft as they pleas'd; and if there needed nothing but their will to forsake their sins.

She said: No, Sir, Grace is not in their power, and they cannot recover it (z) according to their pleasure. It is called *GRACE*, because it is a thing freely given: it is not a debt or obligation, which may be constrain'd, for it comes of the sole mercy of God, and not of our desires, or merits. Neither does it depend upon the will (a) of a sinner to leave his sin. He may indeed fall into it of himself, but he cannot rise again without the grace of God: But (b) this grace will never be deny'd him, if he ask it in humility of heart. If we see sinners obstinate and impenitent, it is because they do not pray earnestly enough to obtain grace: for God is so good, that as soon as the sinner (c) is truly penitent, he pardons him. All the difficulty the sinner has to leave off his sin, proceeds from sin it self, which (d) blinds the soul, that it cannot perceive the terror of sin, and the danger in which it has plunged him. It has also in it so many chains and bonds (e) with which it holds all his passions chain'd in such captivity, that it seems to the soul impossible to leave off and forsake it; so that we hear sometimes sinners say, *It is impossible for me to forsake my sin.* Not that God is the Author of this impossibility; for (f) *he wills not the death of a sinner, but that he should turn and live.* It is only the bondage into which sin reduces the soul that is under its dominion. It must do (g) violence to its self to break its bonds, and avoid the occasions of sin: by so doing, it will recover the grace of God, which is not drawn by force, but falls of it self into the soul as soon as sin is gone out thence. For God is always ready at the door (h) to open to him that will knock.

(y) *I*s. 59. 1, 2. (z) *Prov.* 1. 26, 28. *Heb.* 12. 17. (a) *Rom.* 9. 16.
 (b) *Deut.* 4. 29. (c) *Jer.* 3. 12. (d) *Wisd.* 1. 21. 2 *Cor.* 4. 4. 1 *Job.*
 2. 11. (e) *Rom.* 6. 16. 7. 23. *Heb.* 12. 1. (f) *Ezek.* 33. 11.
 (g) *Mat.* 11. 12. (h) *Math.* 7. 7.

The Ninth Conference.

What the Church is : and of its Corruption.

I Said to her : Since the mercy of God is so great, how did you declare to me heretofore, that you despaired of the Salvation of almost all the world ?

She said : It is true, Sir, I am yet of the same opinion, and I cannot see how one soul can enter into Paradise, after the manner they live at present. I see that its gate is shut, and that no body enters in any longer by it, for Jesus Christ says (*i*) that he is the way ; and I do not perceive any body that goes or walks in him, or even that seeks him. Since learned men have taught another way of Salvation than he, every one (*l*) follows them, thinking they do well in believing them, because they make themselves be called the Church, which if it were true, they could not teach otherwise than Jesus Christ has done, since he and his Church (*m*) are the same thing. As Jesus Christ is no other but the Word of God, even so the Church is no other but the same (*n*) Word : It was sent from Heaven (*o*) covered and wrapt up in the humane body, which is called Jesus Christ, which God form'd for these ends, that he might convey this word, which is his Spouse, into the bodies of all Christians, and that all might be (*p*) but one with Jesus Christ, as he is one with his Father. There is nothing but this word (*q*) that can make the Church, which is not tied to the City of *Rome*, or that of *Jerusalem*, but only to souls which possess this Doctrine. These only are the Church. Neither office, nor habit, nor dignity, make the Church, but the doctrine of Jesus Christ only (*r*) ; out of which there can be no Salvation : for it is the only one, sent from God, and will abide always without any change or mutation (*s*). Let all the men of the world study to invent as many

(*i*) *Joh.* 14. 6. (*l*) 2 *Pet.* 2. 1, 2. (*m*) *Colos.* 1. 24. (*n*) 2 *Cor.* 3. 3.
(*o*) *Joh.* 6. 33, 35. (*p*) 17. 17, 21. (*q*) 15. 3. & 1 *Pet.* 1. 23. (*r*) *Joh.*
8. 31. (*s*) *Math.* 24. 35.

reasons, means, and controversies as they will, they can never change or alter the Doctrine of Jesus (*t*) Christ, it will always be such, as it was in the beginning, and shall be even to the end, without any change or mutation whatsoever. It is an error to believe, and damnation to follow any other thing, how good and holy soever it doth appear.

I said to her; That it was true there was no Salvation out of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, but there were yet many souls in the world who would follow it, and that those who would contradict it are call'd Hereticks, and are cut off from the Church; but for the Pope, the Cardinals, Bishops, Pastors, all the rest of the Clergy of the Roman Church, they believed that they had the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and consequently the Keys of Paradise, and the Way of Salvation.

*She said: There is yet some light in your Soul, Sir, since you know that there is no Salvation out of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ: but to say, that there are yet in the world Souls, who desire to follow it, I have experienc'd the contrary, having travell'd in diverse Countries, and as it were by the permission of God, I have been acquainted with different persons, who were esteem'd holy and vertuous, but I never observ'd any who follow'd truly the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. Every one abounded in his own sense, and were wedded to their particular devotions, without an entire dependance on the will of God, or the denial of their own will, (*u*) which is the foundation of a Christian Life; from which the heads of the Roman Church are far removed, since they forbid Christians to read the words of Jesus Christ, which is (*x*) the nourishment of Souls. They cannot open Paradise by any other mean, nor promise Salvation to any (except in words) but by observance of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. Mens blindness is so great in this point, that it can no longer be seen where the true Church it at present, because they place faith in words, hope in presumption, and charity in gold and silver: and they make of the Church of God which is spiritual, a Church of wood, of stone, and of mettals, which are material; and nevertheless, they believe that they are in the way of Salvation, and that they follow the Doctrine of Jesus Christ!*

(*t*) Gal. 1. 8, 9. (*u*) Luke 14. 26, 27. (*x*) Amos 8. 11, 12.

which

Conf. IX. *The Church, and its Corruptions.* 47

which is the greatest error that ever was in the world ; and therefore I fear there shall be so few Souls at present saved, because few, or none, follow in deed, this Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and there is nothing more true than that without doing this, we cannot be saved, as you also acknowledge. One must have very little judgment, if he do not perceive, that in the *Roman Church*, the Cardinals, Bishops, Pastors, Monks, and religious persons, and all the Clergy in general, do not live conformably to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, nor in the primitive spirit of Christianity. (1) *If the Salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall the flesh be salted?* that is the common people cannot be preserved sound, when their Heads and Governours are fallen away and corrupted. (2) This is the cause and the origine of all the corruption of the world, and that its evil is remediless: when a remedy is poyson'd, it cannot cure the Disease, but rather make it worse, as we see the world is declining daily, yea every moment, to the worse. Those who are cut off from the said Church, and whom they call Hereticks, can never do so great mischief to the true Church, as these persons do who call themselves the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, tho they are fallen away from the Doctrine of Jesus Christ: since no well-meaning persons will follow Hereticks; they rather have an abhorrence of them: but even well-disposed persons, leaning to the direction of those who are intrusted with the spiritual government of the people, do insensibly commit infinite evils, following the direction of these Doctors, while they do not lead them according to the words of Jesus Christ; for their own doctrines cannot but poyson the most pious Souls. This is a Leprosy which has infected the whole Church of God, which is transmitted from one to another, so far as that there are no longer any sound members to be found. I bewail only those who desire to follow the truth, for they know not where to find it; for it is not no longer where it ought to be. He who believes the contrary, is deceiv'd; and he who says it, deceives others. Jesus Christ is the Truth alone. (a).

(1) *Math. 5. 13.* (2) *Jer. 23. 15.* (a) *Joh. 14. 6.*

The Tenth Conference.

Of Remission of Sins: of Confession, and how it is abused.

I Ask'd her; if she did not believe in the Remission of sins; since she maintained so confidently, that few, or none, will be saved, and that Paradise is shut?

She answer'd: Yes, Sir, I believe in the Remission of sins. In that consists my joy, and my hope. I have even told you before, that as soon as the sinner knocks, God opens to him. He needs but turn to him, to obtain the pardon of his sins, (b) how great and numerous soever they may have been. It is not for want of mercy in God, that I despair of the Salvation of men, but because they will not be converted, because the most part do not, or will not know their sins. I have more hopes of the conversion of gross sinners, than of persons who make a profession of virtue; because of the presumption of their Salvation, grounded upon their own Righteousness, they cannot be so readily converted, as a sinner who knows his evil life; he is more ready to repent of it, than they who believe that they live well, tho it be not true. It is of these that Jesus Christ says, that he (c) came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. So many Souls will be mistaken at death, who think they are certain of their Salvation, whereas they are very far from it, taking false virtue for the true. It is in this that Jesus Christ says, that (d) he will judge of Righteousness. He cannot judge nor condemn the Righteousness, which is truly such before him; but he speaks of our Righteousness which is righteous in our judgment, and in that of men. Such Righteousness will be condemn'd of God, because they were not righteous before his piercing eyes, as they appear'd unto the eyes of men, and to our own. Behold why I said that Paradise is shut, because I cannot discern at present, true Righteousness in the virtuous.

(b) *Is. i. 16, 17, 18.* (c) *Math. 9. 13.* (d) *Luk. 16. 15. Joh. 16. 8.*

I askt

29 *I ask her Whether sins were pardon'd by the Sacrament of Penance, which is the Confession of sins to the Priests.*

30 *She said:* Sir, there are so many abuses committed by this Sacrament, that I believe more sins are committed by it than pardon'd; for people believe, that to obtain the pardon of their sins it is enough that they declare them to the Priest, and upon this perswasion they take little care to amend them: neither also can they have great contrition for a thing which is so easily effac'd, by the small confusion that they have in declaring their sins to the Priest. No body would quit his pleasure, and the contentment which he finds in sin, for so small a trouble as there is in confessing it. Hence it comes, that we see people continue, and even increase their sins all their lifetime: Thus this Confession, which is appointed for their Salvation, serves to procure their Damnation; because for many Confessions without amendment make a profeness of Sacrileges, of which they never repent; because they believe they shall obtain life with these very means that occasion their death: and when the soul is about to be separated from the body, they only place the hope of their salvation in the same Confession, which has wounded the soul with so great a number of mortal wounds.

It was a great unhappiness did then befall the world, Sir, when the Church taught, that to live well and to be saved a man must confess often. [The Catechisms which they teach the Children of Christians, are stuff'd with such doctrines; and in all the Indulgences which the Church bestows, she always ordains Confessions as one of the necessary means for obtaining the said Indulgences. Every body teaches the doing of what is ordain'd by the Church in this case. I would willingly ask, if this be not to teach indirectly, that a man must sin frequently, when they teach, that he must confess often, since Confession does always suppose sin? He cannot confess frequently without sinning frequently; for they who have not sin'd, have nothing to confess; nor can they do it frequently without an express commission of sins, that they may have matter of confessing frequently. I believe Confessors have invented these multitudes of Confessions, that thereby they may draw the people to themselves, instead of leading them to Christ. A true Shepherd takes more pains to cure his Sheep, and does not neglect its Scab, that he may be oblig'd to take it often in his lap, as these strange

Shepherds do, who love rather to draw to themselves souls continually laden with sins, than to send them to God by the spirit of true repentance. This is an error which was introduc'd into the Church by the cunning of that pernicious Antichrist; that he might withdraw the souls of sinners from Christ, who calls them, saying, (e) *Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*; and to lead them to men who flatter and keep them in their sins, under a false promise of their Salvation; for there is none but God only (f) who can pardon sins; and men, who pretend to be in Gods stead, and do not observe his word, are Seducers, since his word only can pardon sins. It is true it was transferred to men with the same vertue which it had in the body of Jesus Christ; but this was only as long as they should continue to persevere faithfully in that word, and no otherwise. The (h) Apostles did all their works by vertue of this word, and not by their own authority. These Confessors do the quite contrary, remitting sins according to their fancies and will; and instead of saying to sinners, (i) *go, and sin no more*, as Jesus Christ did to the persons whose sins he pardon'd, as to the Paralytick, and to the Woman taken in Adultery; these Confessors say, come again to Confession, and (l) *we will still absolve you*.

Jesus Christ says, (m) *If thou hast a quarrel with thy Brother, leave thy Offering, and go be reconcil'd with thy Brother*; and these Confessors with a word send them quickly to the Altar without Reconciliation. Do they not act directly in opposition to Christ?

I said to her, that I had never search'd so deep in this matter, but that I would willingly know, if it be not of Confession that Jesus Christ speaks, when he says, (n) *That which you bind on earth, I will do it also in heaven*; and then when St. Peter ask'd, (o) *If he should seven times forgive his brother who had offended him*, Jesus Christ answers, not only seven times, but seventy seven times.

She reply'd: Sir, take heed; this light is not from men, I never spoke so openly to any body; but I see plainly that you will profit by it. To give a solution to your first

(e) Math. 11. 28. (f) Isa. 43. 25. (g) Joh. 15. 7. (h) 2 Cor. 5. 19, 20. (i) Joh. 5. 14. 8. 11. (l) 2 Per. 2. 19. (m) Math. 5. 23, 24. (n) Math. 16. 19. Joh. 20. 23. (o) Math. 18. 21, 22.

Conf. X. Confession and Remission.

51

question, Whether Jesus Christ did not speak touching Confession, *all that you shall do on earth, I will do in heaven*? this is certainly as to the remitting and retaining of sins; but it is not after the manner that men understand it, for God never gave this authority to men in themselves, but to his Church, which is nothing else but his word; and therefore this authority does reside always where this word resides. *Moses*, and so many other Prophets, who wrought so many Wonders in the world, performed them by vertue of this word, and not by their own authority and power. They went always to God, to know what they ought to do; and they wrought according to his will, in no ways according to their own: for man has nothing of himself but an impotence instead of power; but the word of God has power in all places where it resides, even tho' it should reside in a wicked soul. Therefore sometimes, even the beasts have wrought miracles. By vertue of this word, the heavens and the earth (p) do subsist. It has the same vertue to remit and retain sins in the bodies of Confessors, that it had in the natural and humane body of Jesus Christ; for it is always the same which proceeds from Almighty God. The only difficulty that I find is to know, whether it can still reside in the Confessors at present, who do not follow the rules of this holy doctrine. God has indeed promis'd to pardon sins to penitent sinners; and these Confessors do pardon them to sinners persevering and continuing in their sins; so that if it were true that these Confessors could pardon sins according to their own fancy, a man would only need to be in favour with some of them, to be assured of his Salvation. It would be in vain therefore, for Jesus Christ to have suffered and endured so much to teach us (q) humility, patience, penitence, and all the rest, if these Confessors with *Absolvo* can thus forgive us all our sins. Every one might indeed live as he pleas'd, as they do now, without caring much for God, since he might obtain Salvation by the means of a man who would call himself the Saviour and Forgiver of sinners. I think a man must be deprived of all judgment not to discover this deceit, whereas at the same time so many persons live and die in this blindness.

(p) Heb. 1. 3 (q) Phil. 2. 3-8
 E 2

This

This is a grosser darkness than that of Egypt.

As to the second point: whether it be in Confession that we must forgive seventy seven times? That cannot be authoriz'd by this passage; since we find no where that Jesus Christ did forgive sins more than once to those to whom he pardon'd. And if a sinner were truly penitent, he would be careful not to fall again so often; but if he be not penitent, he is not capable of obtaining pardon so much as once; for Absolution does always suppose Contrition, otherwise it would not be available. St. Peter asks, how often he shall pardon his brother who offend-ed him? but Penitents have not offended their Confessors when they go to Confession: these so numerous pardons respect the indulgence that we owe to our Christian brethren, that we may leave vengeance to God alone; but they do not at all regard sacramental Confession.

The Eleventh Conference.

Outward Devotions imposed by men are not of true Faith. Of the true Church which cannot err in what it imposeth. The Doctrines of Jesus Christ, and those of men. True Prayer.

Having heard all these reasons, I felt my self in very great perplexities, not knowing what to reply to such firm reasonings. I said only, that the Hereticks were not always to blame, when they spoke against the abuses of the Roman Church.

She said to me: Sir, I never convers'd with any Hereticks; and I desire not to know what their sentiments are in this matter. I was born and baptiz'd under the authority of the Roman Church, and I never yet travell'd out of it, where I might meet with any Hereticks, to know what they say of Catholics; but I have learn'd all that I tell you in a profound recollection of spirit, join'd to a serious experience. I have made frequent Confessions, and perform'd all the other particular Devotions of Christians,

Christians,

Conf. XI. *The vain, and the solid Devotion.* 53

stians, as my Parents did, with an exact observance; but when it pleas'd God to enlighten me, I perceiv'd clearly, that Faith does not consist in the wearing of a pair of Beads, a Belt, or a Scapulary: nor yet in hearing many Masses, or confessing often, and communicating, as they taught me; but that it consists (r) in the belief and practice of what God has commanded and taught us. That all these outward devotions did rather serve as means to withdraw and distract us from the continual attention which we ought to have upon God. Therefore I have quitted them all, and have fix'd upon the Truth of the Gospel, which I knew from my tender youth, tho I could not follow it, because they taught me otherwise. In which I fail'd greatly by the Counsel of men. God drew me to himself, and they drew me to them. I regret nothing more than the time that I have spent in following them: for all that they call Devotions, is nothing but (s) amusement, which keeps us tied to the earth, and to the creatures. Our affections are towards our (ghostly) Fathers, their Masses and Sermons, their Churches, and the means of adorning them, and to all that is sensual; which hinders them from being united in God.

I ask'd her: whether all these outward devotions were not good and saving, since the Church had instituted and approv'd them; and if she could err in what concern'd the Faith and the Instruction of the faithful.

She answer'd: No, Sir, the Church can never err in any thing, for she is the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of God, the fountain of all wisdom, the original of all goodness, and incomprehensible power. In short, the Church is God himself (r), who cannot fail, or err, therefore Jesus Christ says, (u) he that hears you, hears me; because the word of God, is God (x), as our word is us; our heart must be where we speak, and also our understanding; even so, where the word of God is, which is his Church, there the holy spirit is, which is his understanding; and the almighty power, which is his heart. From whence it appears, that the holy Trinity composes the Church, which is no other but the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and the good

(r) Job. 14. 12. (s) Math. 23. 9. (t) Job. 17. 21, 22, 23. 1 Cor. 6. 17. (u) Luc. 10. 16 (x) 1 Job. 1. 1.

will of the Son. All these things are found united in the Church: for God having a design to make man after his likeness, he transferr'd to him his own qualities: therefore he gives to his Church the power to pardon sins; goodness by the communication of his word, and his wisdom by the understanding of that word. Jesus Christ who took human flesh has brought us the word of God, which has taught us his wisdom, and shewn us his love, even as by our word we express what is in our understanding, and the affections of our heart; which God also did to us, when he sent us his word upon earth, by the organ of the humanity of Jesus Christ. He made this alliance with men, that he might have them after his likeness. Therefore he has call'd them his Spouse and his Church, which is altogether divine and spiritual. But men would indeed disguise it, and render it material, sensual, and carnal, in giving the name of *Church* to men who do not possess this word, without which they cannot be the Church, nor have the power, the wisdom, nor the love which God gave to his lawful Spouse: Therefore they may greatly err and fail, in appointing, and approving of rules for Christians.

And whereas you ask, Whether all these outward Devotions, which are now in use in Christendom, be good and saving: I doubt it very much; for Jesus Christ taught not such varieties of devotion, as we see now a-days; but he taught solid and inward vertues, (y) as Faith, Hope, and Charity: Faith to believe in an Almighty God, of whom we hold all things; Hope to hope in him only, without putting our confidence in any other thing; and Charity to love him alone, without placing our affection on any created thing, whether in heaven or in earth.

These are the instructions of Jesus Christ: but those at present who are call'd *Church-men*, teach no other thing but to resort to Churches, to frequent the Sacraments, and to say a great many vocal prayers by rote and number: With these outward things they make men believe, that they are true Christians, which cannot be, since Christianity consists in a spiritual (z) and inward life, for it is divine, and not humane. If these outward de-

(y) *Math.* 23. 23. & *Cor.* 13. 13. (z) *Gal.* 6. 15.

Conf. XI. *The vain, and the solid Devotion.* 35

votions had been means proper for us to become good Christians; we may be persuaded that Jesus Christ would have taught us them; for he had more wisdom to foresee our need and weakness, than these guides of souls can have; and likewise more love to take care, that nothing should be wanting to us for the time to come. He left only his word to serve for the nourishment of our souls, saying, that (a) it is the bread come down from heaven, and that whosoever shall eat it shall not die; whereas these persons give us only the Eucharist for nourishment; in which the promise of Jesus Christ cannot be accomplished, for the host does not descend from heaven as his word does; and they who eat it, do not all live for ever. For we see abominable souls, even Sorcerers, do communicate frequently, and thereafter die in their sins. We see also Bigots communicate very often, who never attain to true faith, nor the knowledge of the truth, without which they cannot live for ever. How then should the word of Jesus Christ be fulfill'd, that they who eat this bread shall not die, since all those die eternally after having so often eaten the Eucharist? Jesus Christ cannot lie; for (b) he who incorporates his word shall never die; because it gives life and nourishment to the soul, and makes it live eternally.

I said to her: This being suppos'd, we must needs be in a time of great darkness, in which there are many errors, and many more erroneous, who run blindly to damnation; because the most pious hold Rome, and all her Council, for the Church.

She said: Sir, the Devil upon a false supposition finds matter enough to raise fine edifices. I have no particular knowledge of Rome, nor of her Council; but I tell you in truth, if the Pope with all his Council would say any thing to me which was contrary to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, I should not be oblig'd to believe him, nor yet are any other Christians. The Bark should never be taken for the Wood, because it can never bear Fruit, as the Tree would do, tho' it had little Bark. The true Church (where-ever it is) (c) brings forth always holy Fruits, and if the Tree be known by its fruit, we will know the Church (d) by what it brings forth. The

(a) Joh. 6. 68 & 50. (b) Joh. 8. 57. (c) Joh. 15. 3. (d) Mat. 7. 20.
E. 4 practice

practice of those who are Members of *Rome*, doth sufficiently evidence to me; that the holy spirit cannot be the Author of those things which are contrary to the practice of Jesus Christ. We see the Prelates attended with Servants, Coaches, and Trains, like to secular Princes: their Furniture and Houses do surpass them. If they had faith to believe, that God being man, was poor and despis'd, they would blush for shame (as all other Christians) to make themselves thus to be honoured. Their faith being dead, they run blindly to damnation. This vail which is put before their eyes, to make them believe, that the Church ought to be upheld by worldly honours, serves for nothing but to flatter them, and to render them insensible of their misery. For if the Church had had need of temporal wealth and honour, Jesus Christ would have provided it. sufficiently, for all appertains to him, being King and Creator of all things. He knew all the revolutions of time: he would surely have foretold them, that it should be permitted them at a certain time to make themselves be honour'd and serv'd; but on the contrary, he foretels (a) that God will cast down the mighty from their seats; (f) that he will resist the proud, and will exalt the humble; and there is nothing which he says more expressely, than that we ought (g) to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart; to which Lesson the arrogance and the pride of Christians now, are directly opposite; and they who may be called by their proper names Antichristians, because they are thus oppos'd to Christ: for these only are Christians, who put in practice this doctrine of Jesus Christ; all others who bear this name without doing it, are nothing but rotten Members of the Church, and it were better they were cut off from it, that the true Christian might be known from the false, and that we might no longer live amidst so many errors, and in so great blindness, and consequently in so great hazard of our salvation, by adhering to mens Laws, and despising Gods, perswading our selves that we do well in following their errors, in trail of the true Light which has proceeded from Jesus Christ. The great unhappiness of men is, that they do not know these truths, and that they fear they would do ill to believe them.

(a) Luke 14. 11. (f) Math. 11. 29. (g) 1 Pet. 5. 6.

Conf. XI. *The weak, and the solid Devotion.* 57

-*She said to her; That it was very lamentable to live in so dangerous a time, in which the most innocent might perish thro' ignorance: asking her, if she knew a remedy for these*

-*She said: The wickedness of men, Sir, has brought this ignorance upon the earth. (h)* Since they forsook the love of the truth, they are given up to the spirit of error. The ignorance is very gross, for every one who would enter into himself, might well perceive in the bottom of his soul, that he does not love God with all his heart, nor his neighbour as himself; which are the chief Commands of God, without the keeping of which one cannot be saved. But men suffer themselves to be amus'd with little Rattles, even as they quiet Children, which cannot at all cure the evil that presses them, but only diverts their minds a little, that they may not think upon, nor be attentive to their pains. These little outward Devotions are the Rattles which those Guides sound in our ears (i), not to cure the wounds which the neglect of this Command of God has caus'd in our soul, but rather to amuse our attention, that it may not discover those eternal truths. They breed up our souls with affections to their persons, (h) under a pretext that they stand in Gods stead. They perswade us, that we shall always receive grace by confessing frequently, as if grace were given by the help of sins: for confession can bring no other grace than pardon of sins; and to receive this grace frequently, there is need of sinning frequently. What real childish amusements are they, to make even those to confess frequently, who they believe have nothing but imperfections to confess! If they did receive grace as often as they go to confession, with so much grace they would leave off their sins, and would not be oblig'd to continue for so long time these confessions. We may believe they do, as those who take Physick out of appetite or custom, which spoils and corrupts the health, instead of preserving it. These ordinary Penitents do wholly the same to their souls; as they do to their bodies: thus they suffer themselves to be amus'd by foolish perswasions; as that also of going often to Church to pray to God, as if it could not be done elsewhere. Nevertheless, Jesus

(h) 2 Thess. 2. 10, 11. (i) 2 Tim. 4. 3, (l) Jude 16.

Christ says, (m) that one ought always to pray, and never to cease. One had need therefore to abide night and day in the Church to fulfil this direction. These are all errors and inventions of men; for a Christian is oblig'd to pray always, at all times, and (n) in all places, without fainting; not only when they are in the Church, as these Guides perswade them, who are no less mistaken in prefixing a certain number of Offices, Prayers, and Beads, and other trifles which they call Prayers, tho they do not know what Prayer is; for it consists in an elevation (o) of the Spirit to God; which may be done while we walk, (p) and work, eat and drink, and even while one is at rest: for our spirit ought to be continually elevated unto God, in acknowledgment of the continual favours which we receive from him: yea, (q) even in sleeping our will ought to bless him always: this is the continual prayer which God demands of us. But we do the quite contrary; for instead of having our spirit elevated to God continually, we employ it in earthly cares and solicitudes about our wealth, our family, our business, or household affairs: So that even in the little time that we are at Church, saying our *Pater Nosters*, our Spirit (r) runs frequently astray, and is not elevated unto God for one moment in a day, yea, it may be has never been so for our whole life: and we think we have prayed to God, provided we go to Church, or say Prayers by muttering over our Beads. These are all new Doctrines, which neither Jesus Christ nor his Apostles ever taught, which do often deprive us of the attention we ought to have to true prayer. I will not blame the going to Church to pray to God. This is very good, when we find in the Church more means, and a greater facility of elevating the spirit unto God, than in the House, or elsewhere: but I blame all those novelties which divert us from God, by amusing us with things that strike upon our senses; for which I can see no remedy, since these evils proceed from those who ought to redress them. If I spoke to these Guides of the Church, and told them these truths, 'tis to be fear'd they would stone me; for they will not be reproved in their actions, far less in their authority; and tho they should

(m) Luke 18. 1. 21. 36. (n) 1 Tim. 2. 8. (o) Psal. 143. 8. (p) 1 Thes. 5. 17, 18. (q) Cant. 5. 2. (r) Isay. 29. 13.

Conf. XI. *The vain, and the solid Devotion.* 59

clearly perceive the truth, they would not receive it; and if I should speak to those who are directed and govern'd by them, they would think that I would deprive them of their Salvation, and render them Hereticks, in not obeying those who call themselves the Church; for they are so far perswaded that they ought to believe and follow their directions, that they would choose rather not to obey God, than to despise the counsel of these men: the blindness is so far gone, that I look upon the evil as desperate: which makes me say, that the world is judg'd, and the sentence is irrevocable: because no body sees his misery, and even will not see it: they would be afraid to offend God by believing the truth of these things.

The Twelfth Conference.

That the Conversion of Men now is desperate, as it was in the days of Noah; and wherefore.

I Said to her; that there were yet many souls in the world capable of receiving these truths; and if they heard these things, they would infallibly open their eyes, and leave their errors, requesting her, that she would yet speak to others besides me.

She said: Truly, Sir, I cannot do it, for I see no hopes that I can profit by it. The darkness is too grear, and the evil too inveterate. As long as God shall not destroy (s) the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent, they will not receive the evangelical simplicity; and (t) If they be not converted, and become as little Children, they will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. It would be in vain therefore to speak to them. But if you know any one, Sir, whose understanding is bounded, and his will subjected to God, you may make the experiment. For my part, I desire to continue unknown, that I may preserve my quiet, and find leisure to entertain my self with God. I think the plagues are so near, that shortly there will be no need of Preachers to proclaim the judg-

(s) *Is.* 29. 14. (t) *Math.* 18. 3.

ment; for the plagues will make themselves be felt sufficiently by unbelievers, who (in my opinion) will be converted too late; for the (u) pains will be so great, that they will not know whither to turn them for fear. Never any such thing has been seen since the world was made: I'm afraid only for those who will not believe, (x) because they will not be converted, and will not prepare for sufferings; and being surpriz'd at unawares, will be in danger of perishing with the wicked, for thus it fell out in the time of the universal Deluge: tho' it is to be believ'd there were yet some here and there who feared God, nevertheless all perished because of their unbelief. Eight persons only did escape the shipwreck; because they believed the word of Noah. And now, when we speak of the last times and of Judgment, they think we (y) tell them fables: yea, they reject them as untrue and impertinent discourses. One says, *this will not fall out in my time*, and thus they thrust it out of their minds. This has often troubled me; for one must be without Charity who is not grieved to see his Neighbour perish, while he will not believe his danger, nor will he have help.

I said to her: that the evil could not be wholly desperate, so long as there was yet Life in man: that he might still be converted: that he has always God for his Father, who abounds in mercy: entreating her to discover these truths to men; among whom there were yet some without doubt who would follow them; and that Ignorance was the cause of their damnation.

She said; Sir, if there were not an infatuation of mind spread thro' the whole world, I would yet have some hope of the Conversion of some Souls in particular. But this Antichrist by his Devilish arts (z) has corrupted the minds of men, especially of Christians, that he might render them stupid, and without reason in the matter of their salvation, and of the knowledge of God. This stupidity cannot be humane; for there are yet too many fine wits in the world to suffer themselves to be deluded by false persuasions that we are Christians; and that the Roman Church is guided by the holy Spirit; that all the Devotions which are used at present in the Church, are

(u) Mark 13. 19. (x) Math. 24. 37, 38, 39. (y) 2 Pet. 3. 3, 4.
(z) 2 Thes. 2. 9, 10, 11.

Conf. XII. *The Conversion of Men desperate.* 61

things that perfect us, or render us holy; for there needs no more than a simple human reasoning to perceive that there is no Holiness, nor Righteousness, nor Charity among men now: notwithstanding there were never so many Churches in the world, so many Masses, so many receivings of the Sacraments, so many Priests, Monks, Religious and devout persons, as there are at present. Can we conclude that all these things which seem to be holy, are withal good, since they have produced so many bad effects? Could holy things work wickedness in men, as we see and feel it? If this were only among the Heathens, *Jews*, *Turks*, or Hereticks, we might have some ground to believe, that the Christians had received the grace of God by means of their Christian exercises, and the common receiving of the Sacraments, to live better than all those other Sects, who are not the people of God, or at least to be less wicked than they: but we (1) see the quite contrary, that the Christians now a days, have less of righteousness and charity than the *Turks* themselves; and in the mean time they suffer themselves to be blinded with this amulement, that they are Christians, and will be saved with these seeming devotions, and the receiving of the Sacraments. If the Devil had not insinuated all their spirits, it would be impossible that there should be so much as one, how simple soever, who would let himself be persuaded to believe a thing contrary to what he saw with his eyes, felt with his hands, and comprehended with his mind. This is notwithstanding what all people do, while they believe they are Christians, and will be saved after the manner that they live now: (2). It is most true, that the mercy of God is very great, and men may be converted so long as they are yet in life: but by what means do you judge, Sir, that they can be converted? As long as they cannot be convinced, that this outward Church is not the holy Church, and that all those means of Salvation which she has appointed, are not the true means, nobody will ever be converted. For tho indeed their hearts were moved with compunction and repentance thro the fear of Gods judgments, yet they would not return to true faith; but would go seek for the cure of their souls in the Sacraments, and the pious exercises

(a) Ezek. 16. 48, 51. (b) Jer. 7. 4. Rev. 3. 1, 17.

to which they have been so long accusom'd; and thus they would remain in the same state in which they were formerly, without ever attaining to true repentance. For if I should tell them the truth, and teach them the true means of recovering the grace of God, they would believe that I design'd to seduce and deceive them. So much are they pre-occupy'd with lies and delusions.

I said to her; That this proceeded from ignorance: that she ought to declare in particular, wherein true faith does consist; that without doubt many would yet open their eyes, and would embrace it; there being many who desire not to be damn'd, of whom I was one.

*She answered, (c) There is no longer Faith, Sir, among the People of God: It has been banish'd from them since men placed their faith and confidence upon one another; from that time God has been forgotten. Men have made it be believ'd that they would save one another, tho' these Saviours cannot save themselves, nor make one hair of their heads. Nevertheless, by their Perswasions, they have made almost all the World to become Idolatrous. Every one has forsaken the **TRUE FAITH**, to follow and adhere to these men plac'd in Ecclesiastical Dignities, whom they have follow'd and honour'd as Gods, believing they had got enough when they knew how to please and content them. Nature took its content thus, the Mind its satisfaction. In one word, the true invisible and incomprehensible God has been raz'd out of the memory by these false ones visible and sensible to our Nature; they have begun to make the way of Salvation broad, whereas Jesus Christ made it narrow; and the Divine and Spiritual Church they have rendred humane and carnal; and thus they have become still worse till now that we are arrived at the height of all Evil. The greatest of all is, that men do not perceive it, for they are become insensible through so long a custom. I believe, indeed, there are yet many persons who would not be damn'd, but what means is there to save them when they will not believe that they have abandon'd their true Faith? And how can they be made to change so long as they believe that they are well and secure?*

(c) *Hos. 4. 1. Luk. 18. 8.*

The Thirteenth Conference.

Of true Faith, according to the tenour of the Creed: Of the knowledge of God, and of our selves, by the consideration of his Works.

I Told her, That I did not believe that I had true Faith, and that she had sufficiently made appear to me, that I could not be right, therefore I desired to understand of her wherein true Faith does consist, tho' it were but upon my own account, for I desired to profit in it.

She said, Sir, let us examine a little together our Creed, and see if there be so much as one Article of it observed, even by the most perfect Christians now-a-days. If we believ'd that God is Almighty, that he created the Heaven and the Earth, (d) could we live without loving and fearing him, as we do? Could we also attribute to our selves the earthly good things which all the World seeks after and loves, since they are all created by God, and do all appertain to him in Property, which we do daily usurp? In the second place: If we did believe in Jesus Christ the only Son of God, who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, could we reject his Instructions, (e) since he is the Son of God, the Fountain of all Wisdom? Could we follow a Carnal Church, seeing she is altogether Spiritual, engendred in the Body of Jesus Christ by the operation of the holy Spirit? Could we also live in Luxury, when God chose a Virgin for his own Mother? Would we not endeavour to love Virginity, since God has so much esteem'd it?

Moreover, if we believ'd that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has suffer'd even so far as to be Crucified, Dead and Buried, could we live so softly seeking all eases to our Body, not willing to suffer any thing that is painful, nor affronts, nor tribulations, when we believ'd that the Son of God has indeed suffer'd for us, even to a shameful Death, yea, was buried as a corruptible Man? Would we not imitate, or follow him, at some distance, in case

(d) Mal. 1. 6. (e) Luk. 6. 46.

we had the faith that we profess? Moreover, if we believ'd *that he is risen from Death to Life, that he is ascended into Heaven*, (f) were it possible that we could love this present Life, while we hope that we shall rise again, since Jesus Christ is risen again to ascend unto Heaven? Would not this withdraw our affections from the Earth, through the hope of ascending unto Heaven with Jesus Christ? Were it possible that we would build Houses, and make so many other settlements as we do on Earth, as if it were our abiding City? And if we did believe that Jesus Christ *will come from Heaven to judge the quick and the dead*, (g) were it possible that we would live in so great a neglect of our Salvation, with so little care of making ready our Accounts, to render them to that great Judge who will demand of us an account of all our Thoughts, Words and Deeds? Would we not rather lay aside all our worldly Affairs, to attend on this which is the most important to us, yet, on the contrary, is often the least of our cares? And did we believe likewise, *that there is a holy Spirit, and a holy Church*, (h) is it possible that we would be so little Spiritual, so Natural and Earthly, so wedded to our Senses, in which we live sometimes more brutishly than the Beasts themselves, whereas our Souls ought to be wholly Spiritual and Holy, since we have a Holy Spirit and a Holy Church? And did we believe the *Communion of Saints*, is it possible that every one should be so much wedded to his own Interest and Wealth? If Prayers and good Works ought to be all common amongst Christian Brethren, (i) how much more ought temporal Wealth to be for the succour of our Neighbour, which is very far from Mens dispositions now, who study nothing but to keep up and increase their own Wealth, understanding no other thing but *mine and thine*, both in Spirituals and Temporals? And did we believe *in the remission of Sins*, how would we be penitent and contrite to obtain the pardon of them, instead of continuing in them through hardness of heart, as we see the most part of men do, who finish their Lives in black thoughts and despair, instead of having immediate recourse to mercy,

(f) Coloss. 3. 1, 2, 34. 1 Joh. 3. 2, 3. (g) Luk. 12. 35, 43.
(h) R.m. 8. 9, 10, 11. (i) 1 Joh. 3. 17.

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according to their belief! For he who has promised the remission of Sins, has not promised them time to persevere in them. If this belief were real, they would not persevere in them for one day; for they are not certain of living so long. And did we believe in the *Resurrection of the Flesh*, how could we love and esteem our flesh in a condition so miserable as that of this mortal Life? We would greatly contemn it in the hope we had of its Resurrection, (l) in which it should live most happy, delivered from so many miseries, calamities, and maladies, under which it groans during its exile in this miserable World, which, setting aside the hopes of its Resurrection, must rather be called Death than Life; the belief of this Article would give a disgust of the delights of this present Life, and make us aspire towards that to come. And did we believe in *Life eternal*, what would we not do to obtain it? (m) We would voluntarily forsake Father, Mother, and all our Goods, to obtain this eternal Life, for it deserves more than a thousand Worlds, which cannot last but for a small time in respect of Eternity, whereas we see the most part of men so in love with this miserable Life, that they would fain abide here for an Eternity, though it be filled with miseries and calamities.

Do you not see, Sir, that there is no (n) more faith in the House of God? That no body lives conformably to his belief? That they place faith only in Words, as I have told you formerly? They say over, it may be, every day, their Creed, and yet they do not observe so much as one Article of it. These are nothing but words that vanish into Air; and nevertheless, they would take it very ill to make appear to them that they have not true faith, tho' it be always operative, and never idle. True faith works (o) always the virtues of which I told you, in the Souls which possess it; and if these operations are not seen, it may indeed truly be said, that these Souls have not faith, for it can never be any where without operating its virtues, no more than the Sun can be without giving his beams. Consider it well, Sir, and you will find my saying true, and you will condemn your self.

(m) Heb. 11. 8. (n) Luk. 18. 8. (o) Gal. 5. 6.

I told her, I perceived clearly that People lived in a distraction of spirit, and that few persons knew themselves : That it was no wonder they knew not God, since they did not know themselves ; and that truly we were deceived.

She replied, Sir, he who knows God will always know himself ; and he who knows himself will assuredly know God, for the one is linked unto the other ; a serious recollection of spirit may teach us this. We speak of God (says she) as if he were some Phantom ; of Paradise as an imaginary thing ; and of our selves as a temporal and transient thing. Where is the man living who can comprehend what God is, and in what place he abides ? It is true we have need of some words to signify what we would say, therefore we say that God is in Paradise as in the place of his abode : But we must not be so simple as to believe that God has any particular abode, for there is nothing which can contain him, being greater than all things. We say that he is in the Heavens, and nevertheless the Heavens are but his Creatures, very incapable of being able to contain him. We say that he is on the right hand of his Father, whither he is ascended. These are all words to signify in our Gibberish our little conceptions, but (p) we can never attain to the knowledge of what God is, or Paradise, or even our own Souls ; for this cause we make often wrong judgments, and the Learned fill our minds in this, as in other things, with the Idea's of their Imaginations, which are of little use for our Salvation, and far less for the Glory of God, for frequently we give attributes to him which do greatly diminish it, to speak after our fashion. (q) It is enough for our Salvation and his Glory, that we know that there is one God, and that he is the fountain of all Wisdom, the accomplishment of all Power, the perfection of all Goodness, who never had beginning, and shall never have end ; that he is an invisible and incomprehensible Spirit, and that he has given us an understanding to comprehend all these Divine Attributes, (r) through the operations which they produce in our minds. We may first know that there is a God, because we feel in our selves that we have a dependance upon

(p) *Job 36. 26-37. 23. 1 Tim. 6. 16. (q) Jer. 9. 24. (r) Añ. 14. 17. Rom. 1. 19; 20.*

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something which we cannot comprehend, since all those things which we see in Heaven and in Earth are not capable of having created us, nor of maintaining us: for all men, and all the stars, with all that is created in heaven and in earth, cannot add one hair unto our head, nor give us one moment of life. We must conclude therefore that there is a God above all things, who has created all, who upholds and governs all, by a supream power, since nothing can have given being unto its self, there must have been of necessity some author of all things, who has given them all a being and beginning. No body can be ignorant of this truth, tho they had nothing but a Pagan light. And to perceive that he is the fountain of all wisdom, we need but consider this beautiful universe, how marvellously well done it is. What artifice could keep the Globe of the Earth among the Waters? What can give splendour to the Sun? Beauty to the Moon? Lights to the Stars? Who can make a tree, a fruit, a flower, a plant of so many different herbs? Who can have made the birds of the air, the beasts of the earth and of the sea, in so many different kinds? And above all, who could have formed the body of man so wonderfully shap'd, with so many different members? How many veins, muscles, and tendons, do concur to tye up this tender flesh! What master could ever make such a masterpiece! must not this proceed from the fountain of all wisdom, from which all the wisdom of men is derived, which we admire without knowing the author of it, except by the operations which we experience in our selves.

Who can be ignorant of his infinite wisdom, while he looks upon the Creation, and the upholding of this great Universe? Who does not feel that he has not in himself any power, if it be not given from a supream power which we do not know? Who can be ignorant of that Incomprehensible Goodness, while he receives every moment the effects of it? All that man has, he holds it of the Goodness of God: for he could not have merited any thing before that God of his Goodness alone did create him. We perceive evidently that he is an Invisible and Incomprehensible spirit, for none ever saw God, or can comprehend what he is. He can never have had beginning, having given beginning to all things. How can that end which is eternally incomprehensible? our soul cannot

even comprehend itself; nevertheless we may well judge that it is immortal: for the Wisdom of God could never have created it to live for so small a time as we are upon earth. He would have done a thing which was not good, (s) which cannot be: for our soul is always in bondage, (t) so long as it animates this our miserable body: God should not be just (u), if he gave it not another time to rejoyce with him; else the end of its creation should be miserable. It must needs be for accomplishing the goodness and righteousness of God, that it live a blessed eternity; so that even he could not have created our body to live only this so miserable short life: by far greater reason our soul, which he created after his own image, and according to his own likeness, could not be created to be only a Prisoner in our body, where it cannot act but by its co-operation with it; no more can God act in us, but by (x) the co-operation of our soul, because there is an indissoluble union in respect of the one and of the other. For God is united with our soul, as our body is also united with the same.

I admir'd these marvellous and unheard of discourses; and that I might understand more, I told her, I had never sufficiently understood, how the knowledge of God was unseparable from the knowledge of our selves.

She said to me, Sir, this is very easie to comprehend, if you will seriously reflect upon it; for no body can know that God is the fountain of all wisdom, without perceiving at the same time that we can have nothing but ignorance only; as experience makes sufficiently appear, that no body has wisdom at his wish, that (y) it must be derived from that supream fountain, whose works being considered, it must be presently known and acknowledged, that all our wisdom, how great soever we may have imagin'd it, being compar'd with the wisdom of God, is nothing but pure ignorance, and this not being known, we will think that our wisdom is great: As a person is always the most beautiful, and the most perfect, when she is alone; but approaching others who have more perfection than she, this makes her know what she is truly. Even so when we know the perfections

(s) Deut. 32. 4. (t) 2 Cor. 5. 4. (u) Job 10. 3, 8. (x) 1 Cor. 3. 9. 2 Pet. 1. 5. (y) Wisd. 8. 21.

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of God, we know our own imperfections. If we know his almighty power, we shall presently perceive our own weakness; or the perfection of his goodness, we shall discover how far ours is from it. For this cause I have said, that we cannot know God, without knowing our selves; neither can we know our selves, without knowing God: for he who knows that he is but a pure *nothing*, he must confess that there is something above him, from whom he has receiv'd what he is; because a *Nothing* cannot do any thing, nor give any thing to its self. Every one knows well, that there has been a time in which he was not; and when he is made, he does not know how, nor from whence he is taken, which obliges him to acknowledge a God, the Author of all things: and even tho he went not out of himself, he must know God.

All these truths seem'd to me so clear, that I knew not how they could be call'd in question; tho in the mean time we see no body attains to this knowledge of God, or of himself; that it must needs be acknowledged, that we were fallen into a total forgetfulness of God, and ignorance of our selves, and that we were assuredly deceiv'd and seduc'd.

She said to me, Sir, the deceit is so great, that no body can comprehend it. We run, as it were, blindfold to damnation without perceiving it; and whereas those who guide us, ought to set us again into the right way, (z) they are the very persons who deceive us, because they themselves are deceived by Satan. Wherefore there is nothing to be hop'd for but a total ruine, (a) which will be irreparable, seeing that it is eternal. We are careful enough to avoid the perils of the body, but we are too little careful to avoid the perils of the soul, which are without comparifon much more considerable. Man having forsaken his God, from whom can he expect Salvation? When we leave God, assuredly he leaves us: (b) not that he withdraws himself from us, in respect of himself; because he abides always through all without any change. (c) But he withdraws himself from us, when we withdraw our selves from him; for a thing which we leave cannot abide with us; it is always as far from us, as we are far from it, tho we only make this

(z) *Isa.* 3. 12. (a) *Rev.* 18. 21. (b) *Pj.* 33. 8. *Alt* 17. 27, 28.

(c) *Isa.* 59. 1, 2. *Hebr.* 10. 38.

separation. It is fit to understand, how we can truly say, that *God leaves us or forsakes us*; because many understand it amiss, in attributing to God the cause of this forsaking. It may be said, that God has forsaken us now, because this is true; but we ought always to understand in what manner he leaves us: for otherwise we blaspheme against God, not by words but intention, in conceiving that God does of himself forsake us.

The Fourteenth Conference.

How God forsakes us, and how we forsake him, by distraction of Spirit, by which the Devil has seduc'd men, withdrawing them from the Love and Gratitude which they owe to God, who by all things does most sensibly discover himself to be alone lovely.

I Ask'd her, by what mean we had fallen into such an ignorance, and abandoning of God, and of our selves?

She said: By the straying of our spirit, which has left off to entertain it self with the consideration of the marvels of God. Our soul was created to love him, and to bless him continually; in which consists the continual prayer which Jesus Christ (*d*) has recommended to us since he became man: for we have no other thing to do in this world but this continual prayer; God having given us all the rest. We see in the Creation of *Adam*, that he had no need to think on any other thing but to bless and love God; and if he had entertain'd himself in this praise and love, we had never fallen into all the miseries under which we yet groan.

(*e*) The Devil, who is nam'd the Serpent, made it his business to entertain them, to the end he might distract them from the Communion which they ought to have with God. How soon he got the Woman to listen to him, he began to draw her affections (which were due to God

(*d*) Luk. 18, 1. 21, 36. 1 Thes. 5, 13. (*e*) Gen. 3, 1, &c.

only) towards the fruits of the earth, which were given her only for use, and not to place her affection upon them ; from hence he likewise incited her to desire knowledge of good and evil, withdrawing the attention which she had to God, to apply it unto curiosity, and a desire to be great and wise. Lo this was the cause why we did abandon God, and lose the knowledge of our selves. Our first Parents began to do this in the terrestrial Paradise, and we have continu'd it from generation to generation, until we have arriv'd (f) unto a total forgetfulness of God, and an entire ignorance of our selves. For if you will consider it well, Sir, you will be oblig'd to say, that all men say really in their hearts, (g) *There is no God* ; because all their actions are done as if there were none ; and this evil proceeds from no other thing, but that our spirit has no longer communion with God.

I ask'd her, Whether men now do the same things which our first Parents did in the earthly Paradise, and if they let themselves be thus seduced by the Devil ?

She answered : Truly, Sir, they do much worse ; for they do not follow the suggestion of the Devil in one thing only, but in all their actions, desires, and enterprizes. Who does not see now adays, that all men have left off to entertain their spirits with God, and that they have fix'd them on the consideration of created things, hearkening willingly unto things curious and pleasant to their senses, as our Mother *Eve* did ? And when the Devil proposes to our thoughts any thing which seems to be either pleasant or profitable to our nature, who does not presently follow it without restraint and without fear ? and instead of fixing upon the consideration of the wonderful works of God, we are continually busied in seeking our pleasures in the creatures, in self-complacency, or in the desires and coveting of earthly goods ; which things do entirely (h) withdraw us from the total attention that we ought to have upon God alone, for whom we are created, and not for these things which are subjected to us, and which God created for our (i) footstools, as the earth and metals : and we will needs carry them upon our shoulders, yea even upon our head, and in our heart ! The Devil represents to us that these earthly

(f) *Eph.* 4. 78. (g) *Psal.* 14. 1. (h) *Math.* 6. 21. (i) *Pf.* 8. 7.
F 4 pleasures

pleasures are delightful ; that these beauties are agreeable ; that with Money we may do and know every thing : and we believe this deceiver, and follow his counsels, employing the whole time of our life in seeking our pleasures and contentments, and in heaping together earthly goods, which is the cause that we are diverted from God ; for our spirit and understanding cannot attend upon two things so distant from one another, as is God and the creatures. We abandon the *All* to seek the *Nothing*, as did our first Parents.

I said to her: That Adam and Eve were expressly forbidden to eat of the fruit of a tree ; and that we are not thus expressly forbidden by God to love the creatures.

She reply'd: He has not only once thus forbidden us, but many times, in different times and ages. The Prohibition which God gave unto our first Parents, Sir, was directed unto all men who were to come of *Adam*, because he held in his power the free will of all his posterity. Therefore God spoke to all men, when he spoke to our first Father. The Prohibition which he gave him (*m*) not to eat of the fruit of a tree, was nothing but an outward sign of the dependance which he ow'd unto God ; even as a Superior reserves to himself some yearly rent in the Donation which he makes of his Lands or Mannors, to the end that always these goods or lands, may be oblig'd yearly to acknowledge the Superiour upon whom they depend. God had bestow'd on man all this beautiful world which we behold, with all that is in it ; but he would have him still to acknowledge the dependance that he had upon his God and Lord, that the knowledge of this might oblige them to love such a Benefactor, who had given them all these created things, which they might enjoy, provided always they did acknowledge and love the God who had so freely bestow'd them.

He forbade them to eat of one Tree only, permitting them to eat of all the rest, to shew that he permitted man to enjoy all the fruits of the earth, provided he preserve always the obligation that he has to God. He requires for a Testimony of this, that he abstain from eating of this forbidden fruit, to the end he might never forget the love, and the obedience which he ow'd unto the

(1) *Math.* 4 : 8. (n) *Gen.* 1 : 7.

Lord, from whom he had receiv'd all things. This Prohibition is no other thing but a Command to love him, which being done, man might do all that he desir'd. This Commandment was also given unto man, when God requir'd Sacrifices from him ; not that God had need of beasts, or other things ; but he demands this outward testimony in confirmation of the inward acknowledgment, and love which they bear unto God the giver of all things. The Law he gave to *Moses* contain'd also no other thing but this love (n) and gratitude which we owe unto our God. Tho these Commandments are divided into ten, yet they are all comprehended in that of loving and acknowledging God ; for all the rest are but prohibitions not to do the things which would hinder this love and gratitude, because he who takes the name of God in vain, or he who steals, or covets his Neighbors goods, or commits Fornication, and so of the rest, does not love nor acknowledge God. (o) And to make this love and acknowledgment easie to him, God forbids him to commit these things, as being contrary to this love. But as to the summ of these Commandments it consists in one only, to wit, in the love and acknowledgment of God ; when he commands to keep holy the Feasts, and to honour Father and Mother ; all this depends upon the love of God, which we ought to testify also outwardly in sanctifying the days which are dedicated unto him. The honour which we owe to Fathers and Mothers signifies only an acknowledgmen't that we owe unto our Benefactors, of whom God is the principal, yea even (p) the giver of all things ; but because our Parents do us good in nourishing, helping, caring for us, and teaching us during our weaknes, he commands us to honour them as little Gods, for the small good things which they do us, to the end that by this outward acknowledgment, we may be mindful of our acknowledgments which we owe (q) to God, in proportion to the benefits which we receive from him. Behold how God has many times forbidden us not to love the creatures, since by so many diverse ways he commands us to love him to the exclusion of all things. Which Jesus Christ himself has well exprest

(n) *Deut.* 10. 12. (o) *Joh.* 3. 11. (p) *Jam.* 1. 17. (q) *Mal.* 1. 6.

to us, when he says, that we must (r) love God with all our heart, with all our strength, and with all our thoughts. There could not be more express terms to shew, that our heart is created for God only, and for nothing else.

I receiv'd such light by these reasonings, that it was my delight to hear them: And to make her speak the more, I said to her, that there were some Authors who maintain'd, that it was impossible to love God with all our hearts, and to keep his Commandments.

She was mov'd with anger; saying:—What injury do they to God by such sentiments! I swear to you, Sir, these persons know neither God nor themselves; when they assert such things. They are insupportable to me. What well dispos'd Soul could suffer, that they should say of God, that he has given (s) Commandments to man, which it is impossible for him to observe. This is to desire to make him pass for a Tyrant, and also for an Ignorant. For to lay on a heavier burthen than our shoulders could bear would be a Cruelty; and to damn men for not having done that which was impossible for them, a Tyranny. Could God give insupportable Laws without being unjust? Could he overcharge men without cruelty? He who made men, could he be ignorant of their strength and capacity, that he did not give them laws according to their weakness or infirmities? What Blasphemies do they commit, against the supreme Wisdom which knows all things! What injury to that straight Righteousness. What contempt to make him ignorant of the strength and capacity of men! He who knows (t) the most secret thoughts of the heart, and all things past and to come, as well as the present. O ingrate creature! If thou knewest thy self, thou would'st perceive but too much, that thou art capable (u) of loving God with all thy heart! For there is nothing more natural to man than love; and there is nothing which does more oblige to love, than the benefits receiv'd without having merited them. What is wanting to you therefore to be able to love with all your heart? Is there any thing more lovely than he, all-beautiful, all-good, all-wise, all-perfect; in short, (x) the accomplishment of all perfections! Our

(r) *Math.* 22. 37, (s) *Deut.* 30. 11, 12, 13. (t) *Psal.* 94. 9, 10, 11. (u) *Deut.* 30. 11-16. (x) *Cant.* 5. 16.

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heart, which cannot live without love, could it find any object more lovely, or any greater subject of acknowledgment for so many benefits received from him?

I said to her: That it was truth; and that no objects could be found so worthy of our affection as God is; but the evil came from this, that we did not see nor feel God, as we do the creatures, which are material and sensible to our senses.

She said to me: It is true, Sir, God being a pure Spirit, is not visible nor sensible to our natural senses. But believe me, he is more visible and sensible to our understanding (y) by his works, than are all the creatures together; and he does us also much more good, than all that is created in heaven and in earth. For this cause we ought to love him alone more than all other things together; for if our understanding would apply its self to the consideration of the wonderful works of God, it would find more ground to love God than any thing, how lovely soever it might be, even according to the natural senses. All the mischief proceeds from this, that our senses are distracted from the works of God, and that we apply them to know, and to love, earthly objects which are below us, and unworthy of being lov'd by us; for they can give us no other thing, but divertisement of mind, and amusement of our senses, without any profit, since all is but vanity, passing away in a moment, without leaving any thing in our souls, but vexations and regrets at death. Behold the height of all the happiness we can ever hope for, in loving any creatures whatsoever. A mans mind must be infatuated if he do not find in the works of God, and in his operations which we experience in our selves, all sorts of occasions to love and to follow him. For who can consider the beauty of the Sun, and of the Stars of Heaven, the good and fertility of the Flowers, and Fruits of the Earth, without being ravish'd with admiration, in considering what beauty and goodness he must have, who gives them to all these things! We amuse our selves sometimes in loving a stone, a flower, or a humane creature for its beauty; and we do not raise our understandings to love the fountain, and the giver of all these beauties, which is God! most durably beautiful, who cannot fade, as do

(y) Rom. 1. 20.

all these other beauties, which are nothing but phantastical and changeable, If God had not the perfection of all beauties, how could he give it to so many diverse things; for one can never give that which he himself has not? Who can say therefore, that we do not see nor feel God as we do the creatures? since he shews himself, (z) and lets himself be felt by his operations, which are sensible to our senses. Who can say, that he does not continually perceive God operating in him, and doing him infinite good? That we have (a) a being, is by the good will of God. That we see, or speak, or hear, are the gifts of God. That we reason with our understanding; that we enjoy our five natural Senses: these are all gifts of God which no body can give unto himself, and which cannot be acquired by Gold, and Silver, or Freinds, let them be who they will. The daily food of our body, does it not all come from God? For what man can make a grain of Corn or a Strawberry to grow? All these things, with a thousand others; do they not afford us sensible enough subjects to know and to love God? Can we say in truth that we do not see him, nor feel him, since he makes himself to be seen and felt every moment, by so many benefits which our Soul and our Body do receive in so great abundance, which cannot come from any other, but from God himself? It would be more true to say, that we could not love the creatures, than that we cannot love God; for they can give us nothing, and God gives us all that we see by our natural senses; and that this impossibility of loving God, and of fulfilling his Commandments, is apply'd to a contrary sense; and that (b) it is more impossible to love the creatures with all our heart, because they can never fill our soul, for it is spiritual, and they are material, and therefore no congruity in them to be loved with all our heart, which cannot be filled but with God alone.

(z) *Act.* 17. 24-29. (a) *Job* 10. 8-12. (b) *Pf.* 73. 25.

The Fifteenth Conference.

That God has never given to Man but one only essential Command, which is that of his LOVE, which is most easie and most agreeable, and the Love of all other things most vain.

I Said unto her ; That she confounded the Ten Commands of God into one, and that they who say, it is impossible to keep his Commands, speak of all, not only of the first.

*She reply'd: Sir, the first is the only Commandment to which God would have us subjected. He has never laid any other burthen upon our shoulders, but this gentle Yoke of LOVE. All the other Laws and Commands are occasioned by our sins, and are ordain'd by God, for no other end, but that we may know them, and beware of them. He perceiv'd that men from the beginning of the world, began to appropriate to themselves Beasts, and other earthly goods, as things depending upon themselves ; which led to a forgetfulness of, and an ingratitude to God. Therefore he appointed the *Sacrifices* of Beasts, and the other First Fruits ; that by these outward signs they might always preserve in their heart the remembrance, that all which they possess came from God. It was his will also, that they should build him a rich Temple for the same reason, that all men might always acknowledge (c) that all their treasures, riches, and magnificences came from God, and did belong to him. Therefore he requires, that they build him a magnificent Temple. Not that God has need of Temples, of Riches, or Treasures, being *All* in himself. But he requires, that man retain this acknowledgment of God, that by the remembrance of so many benefits, he may be oblig'd to love him, and to fulfil this first Commandment. That he gave to *Moses* ten Commands written in stone, was*

(c) 1 Chron. 29. 11-16.

(d) when

(d) when men began to multiply their wickedness, giving themselves to swear, rob, bear false witness, commit fornication, and the rest; the goodness of God forbids all these things, fearing lest the ignorance of these evil deeds might be the cause of their damnation. (e) By these Commands he shews them their sins, forbidding them to commit them any longer, because all these things were hinderances of loving God, as he had commanded them. The Law (f) of *Circumcision* aim'd also at the same, to make man acknowledge that he held his life of God; and for an outward sign of this acknowledgment, he requir'd that he should shed of his blood. Not that he had need either of the blood of men or beasts; but it is his will, that all things should acknowledge that they receiv'd all their being from God, that this acknowledgment might oblige them always to love their Creator. Even (g) the *Evangelical Law* consists in no other thing, but in this first Command of loving God with all our heart. The counsel of poverty, chastity, and the rest of the Evangelical counsels, are given us only for means to attain to this *LOVE*, because he who loves riches, luxury, himself, or other things, (h) cannot love God with all his heart, nor fulfil this first Commandment. By which you may perceive evidently, Sir, that all the Commands of God are comprehended in the first, and that all the rest are only prohibitions to do what would hinder this love; that God has never given us any other Law, but that of loving him; and that the pity which he has to see us perish, made him give all those prohibitions contain'd in his Commandments. Can this be evil, or impossible to be observed, as you have affirm'd to me? Is it impossible to be in the world without killing, robbing, committing adultery, and the rest? It is rather impossible for him who has common sense to do this, for all these evil things are repugnant to good sense, and the love of God delights, comforts, and edifies. How then should it be impossible to do a thing so good, and to omit things so evil; (i) this is most good, useful, and reasonable, most easie even to our natural inclination, which cannot be without loving something, and cannot find an object

(d) 1 Tim. 1. 9. (e) Rom. 13. 20. (f) Gen. 17. 10-13. (g) 1 Joh. 4. 5-19. (h) 1 Joh. 2. 15. (i) Deut. 30. 19, 20.

more good, more wise, more powerful, and more worthy to be lov'd than God, and from which we can derive greater advantages both temporal and eternal than from him.

I told her: That she rendered the love of God easie and agreeable; that no man could have any thing to say against truths so clear and solid; but I would gladly know from whence it comes, that we find them so difficult, and the love of the creatures so easie.

She said: Sir, it proceeds from this, that we keep our mind distracted and diverted from God, and that we apply it only to the view of the creatures; (l) by this means our understanding is filled with these earthly objects, which darken our reason, and render it incapable of discerning aright the things which we see and feel. For if our reason were not darkned, it were impossible that we could love the creatures in themselves, because they are so frail, so impotent, and of so short continuance; which are all qualities very little lovely in respect of the Creator of them, who by his works makes appear unto us his omnipotence, his stability, and constancy, and his eternal duration. The creatures themselves do discover to us this truth: when we behold the Sun continue his carreer since the beginning of the world, the day still to succeed the night, the fountains to give their waters without ceasing, the earth to bring forth its fruit continually, the air its birds, the sea its fishes, nature its beasts, and men. What mighty arm must it be that governs all these things! What power that upholds and maintains them! What immobility that makes them always persist in an equal pace! Is there any reason, how little soever it be, that is not led to love a God, so lovely as he renders himself by the sole government of his creatures?

How much more must he be so in himself? and nevertheless we turn away our understanding from these considerations to turn it towards the creature, which is so frail of its self, that it merits no other thing but (m) to be despis'd by us. For what can there be of lovely in the creatures, of what kind soever they may be? when we consider them only in themselves they are pure No-

(l) 1 Cor. 2. 14. (m) Eccl. 1. 1.

things, which have neither strength, nor beauty, nor goodness, nor perfections; nor duration. All that is beautiful and good in them comes from God; and all sorts of evil come from themselves. If God did not uphold the Sun and all the Stars, in the bounds and limits wherein he has plac'd them, they would assuredly consume all the earth. The creatures may greatly hurt us, and no ways benefit us. We are hurtful to our selves, and if we had not stray'd from sense, and lost our reason, it were impossible that we would be led to love the creatures, and not to love the Creator.

I told her: That there were creatures so lovely, that one must be insensible not to love them, and that we cannot hate, or despise, that which does so strongly tickle our senses as a most fair humane creature would do, and likewise so many other different beauties which God has created.

She said: Sir, I perceive well that you are yet earthly, and that your understanding is not as yet raised from all things to the Lord, since you do not well comprehend my saying. I do not mean, but that we may love all the beauties and goodness in the world; for God has created them all for men (*n*), especially for his elect, who may use and enjoy them at their wish, provided they take them in God who is their fountain: but I blame only the love which is carry'd to the creatures for themselves; for else we must love the beauties and goodness of the creatures if we love God, because we cannot see the beauty and goodness of God but by his creatures: He, being an invisible and incomprehensible spirit (*o*), renders himself visible and comprehensible in his creatures; so that he who sees a fair or good thing, sees God, for there is nothing beautiful and good but he alone. He is all beauty and all goodness; and nothing can be beautiful and good without deriving it from God. But all that is blameable herein, is that our understanding is not apply'd to the consideration of the beauties of God, in considering these earthly beauties. We do not raise our mind higher than these material beauties, which do debase us to the love of the earth, in diverting us from that which we ought to have for God alone. For example; if you regard the beauty of a flower, and love it because

(*n*) 1 Cor. 3. 22. (*o*) *Wisd.* 13. 3, 4, 5.

it tickles your Curiosity, you commit a Folly, because there is nothing lovely in this Flower but the Art of the Workman, who made it : For it it can give you no other but a vain Contentment to the Sight or Smell, which are things that pass in a Moment ; for if you wait but one Day, you will see what you lov'd turned to Dung, and its sweet Smell chang'd into Stink. I have seen Flowers bought for three thousand Florins, with a too vehement Ray of the Sun, has withered in one Day, or, a little Rain, rotted in the same Time : And, which is more, an Earth-worm has kill'd its Root in one Night,

Do you not see Objects not very lovely, to be lov'd by reasonable Creatures, capable of loving a God ? Must not a Man be come to the highest degree of Folly, to set his Affections on things so frail, as to be in one Day reduc'd into the Dung-Hill ? All the Creatures are no other thing in themselves : He who sets his Affections on the Beasts, sees them dye, to his Regret : He who places them in Riches, sees them perish by a renverse of Fortune : He who places them in Honours, sees them perish by some Disgrace. If he place them in Sciences, and in Learning, all this perishes by a small Defluxion falling upon the Brain. Let him place his Affection on any Human Beauty, it passes as quickly as a Flower, and is reduc'd to Corruption. Even so are the Pleasures of the Mouth and of the Body, which afford nothing but great Putrefaction. In short, if we love our selves, in whatsoever it be, we render our selves miserable, for we cannot be reduc'd to a greater Slavery than to be subject to our Passions ; which are sometimes so insolent that they render the most perfect Men miserable. By which we see, that all that is not *God* is nothing but Misery and (p) Vexation of Spirit ; and that there is no Happiness in the Love of all these Creatures, when they are not regarded in their Fountain, which is God ; whom if we did regard, all these Creatures would not be capable of gaining our Affection. For it is impossible to love them without being distracted and turned away from God : For if we considered the Qualities of God, and compared them with those of the Creatures, we would see that those are but Dung compared with Gold : Besides, that all the Crea-

(p) *Ecc. 1. 14.*

tures together cannot save us (q) nor give us so much as one Moment of Life. We pass sometimes our whole Life in studying to render our selves accomplish'd among Men, and they have no Power (r) to make us happy, even in this World; for their Friendship is changeable and their Fortune unconstant. Their Fidelity does often depend upon our Complaisance; a small Word ill plac'd will render them your Enemies: And tho' it were real and constant, death can rob you of it in a Moment, and you will never find them any more in your Need. Do you not see that all things are frail, upon which there is no leaning? no Ground to let our selves be charm'd or our Senses tickl'd, if there were not a Disorder of Spirit and a Forgetfulness of God! And if this were remov'd it is impossible to love the Creatures in themselves, and to cease to love God, even tho he had never commanded us. Even Natural Instinct (s) leads us to his Love, by the consideration of his wonderful Works and of his Benefits which we receive every Moment: There needed no other Love to oblige us to love him with all our Heart, and with all our Strength.

The Sixteenth Conference.

Of continual Prayer and constant Communion with God, for which we were created: And how we are distracted from it by the Business of this World, and by the Enjoyment of frail Creatures.

I Perceiv'd most clearly that all this was true, and moreover, that all Men were very far from such Sentiments; that every one of them spent their Life in the Affairs and Business of the World, and thought not themselves obliged to keep Communion in Spirit with God, fearing that this might

(q) *Dent.* 32. 39. (r) *Isa.* 33. 22. (s) *Isa.* 1. 11, 23.

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rob them of the Time and Occasion of dispatching well their Affairs.

I ask'd her, *Whether every one was oblig'd to keep continual Communion with God ? If this was not the particular Business of the Monks ; the Religious or other Persons, who make Profession of a Spiritual Life, tending to Perfection ?*

She said: Sir, all Christians (t) are Religious, for there can be no other Religion but a Christian Life. Every one, who would be sav'd, is obliged to entertain his Spirit continually with God ; therefore Jesus Christ says (u), That we ought always to pray and never faint. He speaks to Persons of all Conditions ; not to the Religious only, for there were none in his Time who did wear disguised Habits, as they do now, but all Christians were religious, as they are yet at present. Neither the Habit nor the Cloyster do make Religion, but (x) the Observance of the Evangelical Counsels. We are greatly mistaken if we think that God has a Regard to the States and Conditions (y) of Persons : He regards not whether we be Religious or Married ; but whether we observe his Commandments and his Doctrine. Every one is free to chuse what State he will ; provided that in it he observe the Christian Doctrine. There is not any State, nor any Condition that can exempt a Person from keeping continual Communion with God : For he invites us to this, and we are created for no other Thing. All other Affairs or Businesses are but accidental and of small importance ; whether they succeed or miscarry, it matters little ; because all their Successes cannot serve us but for this short Life, which stands not in need of much, if we would content our selves with what is necessary only : In which we would be more happy than all the Kings of the Earth ; for all that we possess beyond this Necessity is Affliction and Vexation of Spirit. God created us to love him only ; and that (z) he might take his Delight with us, and we with him. This is the only End of our Creation. He had no need of us, but he would create us to take his Pleasure with us. This is that which we do least of all think of or apply our selves unto. It seems we would change the Designs that God has concerning us, while we will not follow his Ordinance.

(t) 1 Pet. 2. 9. (u) Luke 18. 1. (x) 1 Cor. 7. 9. (y) Col 3. 2. (z) Prov. 8. 31.

of Praying always. One thinks he is born to be a Lawyer, an Advocote, a Priest, a Monk, a Merchant, or for any other State, Office or Benefice, to which he is advanc'd, and they press hard to perfect themselves, to increase and prosper in it, as if they were created to do this. And, when they are arriv'd at the highest of their Pretensions, Death (a) comes, which consumes all. What a silly Business have we aim'd at? What a poor Stay of all our Hopes? Our Riches are perish'd: (b) Our Honours remain on the Earth: All our Travels, Cares and Labours have left us nothing but Ashes and Rottenness in Recompence of all our Acquests. The Noble and the Ignoble, the Prince and the Servant being all reduc'd to the same Estate, all naked in the Grave, the Poor and the Rich having an equal Portion. Behold the End of all the Business and Affairs of the World, for the Advancement of which we neglect Communion with God, tho' this would advance them more if we were habituated to this Communion, which would perfect all things.

I said to her: That Men were very blind, in not considering seriously these Truths; and that she ought to pray to God that he would take from them the Vail which hindred them from seeing their so great Misery, and that they might comprehend the Obligation they have to pray always, which they were very far from doing.

To which she replied: Men, Sir, are as far from Salvation as they are far from this Knowledge: For Jesus Christ has said nothing in vain. To be saved we ought (c) assuredly to, pray always; for as soon as we shall cease to have our Spirit lifted up to God, we shall fall into many Evils, from which we can very hardly recover our selves, because Sin blinds the Soul, and (d) renders it often insensible of its Evils. If this were not true, how could it be that one should see every Day his Brother or his Neighbour die leaving behind him all upon the Earth, without carrying away any thing; and that he should not thereby discover his own Folly and his Blindness, in labouring with so much Care to heap up earthly Goods, which at Death serve for nothing? What, tho' I pray, Sir, God will never force their Wills; he sends them occasions enough to

(a) *Psal.* 146. 4. (b) *Jam.* 5. 2, 3. (c) *Luke* 18. 1. (d) *Eph.* 4. 18, 19.

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open their Eyes. But as (e) long as they shall continue to have their Affections set on earthly Goods, they cannot love God; one of these Affections must go out to let the other in: They can never dwell both together. And for my part I can never pray for an unjust thing. God makes no body blind; but their Sins, and the little desire they have to seek God has clos'd their Eyes. He well deserves to be sought, and Men do not deserve that God should seek them. There are a great many Persons who say, (f) That they desire to love God, but they desire not to quit their earthly Affections. It is to no purpose to pray for such, because they oppose themselves to the Grace of God, not being willing to part with that which resists his Grace, no more than God will give his Graces (g) but to those who seek and desire them effectually, in forsaking themselves and all other created things, to find God.

I said to her: That all her Sentiments were very far from the Sentiments of Men, who believed that they might love God, while they loved themselves, or some other thing, not vitiously.

She replied to me: All Men now are possess'd with the Spirit of Error and of Ignorance: For to believe that we may love God and our selves or other Creatures, (h) is a great Error and a false Persuasion; for there is no relation between God and the Creature, that they could dwell together in the same Place. Our Soul was created Divine and Spiritual, to the End God may rule there; and if we debase it by the Love of Material and Human Things, it is rendred incapable of Divine things; for that which is Carnal (i) cannot be Spiritual; and as Cold and Heat cannot abide together, so Spiritual Things cannot dwell with Natural, the one does always chase away the other, a Contrary its Contrary. Men (l) live now as carnally as the Beasts, being sensible of nothing but according to our brutish Senses: And yet we would persuade our selves that we are Christians. In which we are greatly deceiv'd, for the Life of a Christian is a Spiritual Life (m), not a Natural. The Beasts are not created but for the Nature of Men; but these are created for God, who is a Divine Spi-

(e) 1 *Job.* 2. 15. (f) *Tit.* 2. (g) *Deut.* 4. 11, 12. 29. *Fer.* 29. 13. 14. (h) *Luke* 14. 26. (i) *Gal.* 5. 17. (l) *Eccl.* 3. 18. 2 *Pet.* 10. 12. (m) *Phil.* 3. 20.

rit. We may sufficiently perceive this, by considering the Course of our Life, which is nothing but Pains, Labours, Vexations and Miseries. Could it be possible that God should have created us for Ends so miserable as what we possess in this World? This truly would be a miserable End. God can never do such an Evil: For no Evils can proceed from him (n), but all sorts of Good. The End of our Creation must be Divine and Spiritual, or else Man would have Reason to curse the Day of his Birth, which makes way for a miserable Life; wherein those who are esteemed the most Happy are most to be bewailed. We will esteem that Man happy who is a King, a Prince, or a Lord; and they are all more miserable than a poor Peasant, who has no other Cares but to maintain his Family and his Person; whereas these others are oblig'd to maintain their Train, their Subjects, their Offices, their Honours, which they are sometimes oblig'd to defend at the Peril of their Lives: Whereas a poor Fellow will accomplish the Course of his Life in Quietness, notwithstanding of the Affronts which he receives. A rich Man is likewise esteem'd happy for his Riches; but what Labours does he not undergo to acquire them? (o) Or what Cares or Disquiets to preserve them? It is altogether a Trade to have Riches. A Man needs no other Work for all his Life-Time but to keep them well. We will esteem a Person happy, who is rais'd to an Estate, Honour and Dignities: Nevertheless there is nothing more miserable, he being subject to all that concerns his Office, not having sometimes the Leisure to attend upon himself. How Circumspect must he be, that he displease not the Great, and that he may satisfy every Body? which is indeed very difficult. What Care must he take to provide for all that maintain him in Honour, fearing lest he fall into any Disgrace or Contempt? How must he bear with the Envious and with Slanderers? In short, Sir, all these things which are call'd *Happiness* in this World, are nothing but phantastical and imaginary Goods, and real Evils. They are so many Rattles which the Devil shakes, that he may divert the Attention we ought to have upon God, and he makes us forget the End for which we are created, by all these Trifles, which are nothing but real Amusements of Children, and they make us

(n) *Wisd.* 1. 13, 14. (o) *Psal.* 39. 7.

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perish through Ignorance, rendring us uncapable of loving God.

I ask'd her ; Whether then all States, Riches and Honours, in which God or Nature has placed Men, ought to be abandon'd ? And if we could not love God with any of these things ?

She replyed : They (p) must be certainly left, Sir, before God can be lov'd : Not that all these things are evil in themselves ; but because of the Infirmitie of our Nature, which has not found the Art of possessing them in God ; and while we possess them in themselves, they are assuredly evil and hurtful to our Soul, hindring it from Communion with God, and from attaining to the End for which it was created. It is just the same as if a Traveller, instead of advancing on his Way, to arrive at the Place which he aims at, would needs stop in all the Gardens through which he must pass, to gather and eat the Fruits which he found in them ; or to pass his Time in Smelling all the Flowers which he saw there : We would reckon such a Person a Fool, as in effect he would be ; because these Amusements and his Loss of Time would deprive him of the Happiness of arriving at the Place he design'd for ; and Night surprizing him by the Way, would put him in hazzard of being pillag'd by the Robbers or devour'd by Wild-Beasts, or at least incommoded as to his Rest, which he would be oblig'd to take on the hard Earth, with many Inconveniencies and Miseries. All these Evils and Dangers would befall him because of the Folly he had committed, in stopping among these Flowers and Fruits. If he had only look'd on them at a distance, smell'd them as he pass'd along, or pull'd an Apple for his Thirst, this had not retarded his Journey ; but might have made it more Light by the Smell of the Flowers, and the Refreshment of the Apple. Even so is it as to Wealth, Honours and Riches ; (q) We being all Travellers and Pilgrims in this Life, which ought to be compar'd but to a Day, because of its short Continuance. We travel towards Eternity ; but in our way we must pass through the Garden of this World, wherein we perceive Fruits and Flowers which tickle our Senses. On one Side we see the Riches which our Parents have left us, or the Honour to which we have succeeded, with some Place or

(p) *Luke 14. 33.* (q) *1 Pet. 2. 11.*

Dignity: These are the pleasant Fruits presented to our Eyes. On the other side we perceive the Odour of Wine and of exquisite Meats, rich Moveables, beautiful Faces: These are as so many divers Flowers and Fruits, which charm our Smell; but if we stop to taste and handle them, we hinder our Journey to Eternity, and we put our selves in Hazzard of being surpriz'd by Death, and devour'd by the Devil, who is always watching to catch us in this Strait. Must not one be very ill advised to amuse himself with these *Nothings*, and lose those things of so great Value? We may indeed look upon all these earthly things at a Distance, even with Contentment, and taste them according as we have need of them, for they are created for us, while we receive them with Thanksgiving; but we ought never to fasten our Affections on them, else we shall never arrive at the *LOVE OF GOD*; For our heart cannot be divided between two so different Objects. He will (r) have all our Heart or none of it: And it can never be fill'd nor fully satisfied but with him alone.

I said to her: That there must always be in the World Persons plac'd in States and Dignities, tho' it were but to keep the People in good Discipline: That all the World could not abandon their Offices, and that I my self was charg'd with one troublesome enough: That I thought I held it of God, for that I did not seek for it.

She said: Sir, I bewail you, with all those who are at present in Charge: For it is very hard for them to keep themselves right in it. I cannot believe that God will place therein any of his Friends, because nothing is done any longer for his Glory; and the Evil is so far advanc'd that it cannot be resisted any longer; so prevalent is it, that the Good are obliged to give Place, and yield to it by Force: So that a good Man, now in Office, must ruin himself or give way to Evil: For he is too weak to resist the Force of the Wicked, who are so numerous. Therefore I said, heretofore, that the Good serve the Devil, as his Slaves, because they are oblig'd to acquiesce to Evil, through Force. In which, nevertheless, they do not cease to sin, by one of the nine Ways, by which we commit it on another; and these Sins are imputed to them, because they tolerate (s) the Evil. It is not enough that

[(r) 1 Sam. 7. 3. Prov. 23. 25. Jer. 3. 10. (s) Ezek. 33. 8. they

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they cannot hinder it: For in not hindring it, if they could, they would commit likewise another of the said Sins, which are committed in another, there being nine ways by which the Sins of another are laid to our Charge. At least, those who are now in Offices do commit that of Tolerating Evil, and cannot escape to do this if they do not abandon their Offices, wherereby they would shew that they love God more than their Offices, and that it was he who had plac'd them in them; but to believe that God has created or call'd us to any State, these are but Fopperies: Because he has created us for no other thing but to love him, as I have so often repeated. States are our own Choice. God forces no Body to be a Pope, Bishop, Prebend, Pastor or Priest, nor yet to be an Attorney, Advocate, Counsellor, President, Governour, or of any other such Office and Benefice whatsoever. Every one is diligent enough to seek for them. It is not as in the former Times, when a *S. Nicholas*, and so others, did hide themselves, that they might not be Bishops, or receive other Dignities: These were not in the Darkness and Ignorance in which we live at present, while we prefer Honours and Wealth to our Salvation, and that with so fine Pretences, that all the World judges we do very right in continuing in States, Offices and Benefices, believing the World would be much worse if all these good Men should abandon their Stations. And for my part, I believe it would be much better: Because they would have more Leisure to attend upon their own Salvation, and the Perverseness of the Wicked would discover it self sooner: Which remaining hid for a longer Time, does more Harm; because an Evil known is easier avoided.

I said to her: It was very evident that God had call'd some to Employments: He said to Peter, That (t) he was the Rock upon which he would build his Church.

She said: 'Tis true, Sir, S. Peter was call'd to the Building of the Church by Jesus Christ: but he would have first a Testimony of him, to know if he lov'd him. He ask'd him (u) three times: The first to know if it was true that he lov'd him in the Sight of God; the second, if he lov'd him by the Testimony of his own Conscience; and the third, if he lov'd him by the Testimony of Men? to teach us that these Conditions are needful to be capable of Ruling well; to wit, the Testimony of God, that he

(t) *Matth.* 16. 18. (u) *Joh.* 21. 15, 16, 17.

say of us, as he said of his Servant *Job*, (x) That we are his Servants; our own Testimony (y) to search if our Conscience reprove us in nothing; and that of our Neighbour (z) if our Actions are such as may make them judge that we truly love God. These are the Conditions whereby to judge if God calls us to the Government of his Flock: In confirmation of which he gives all the Graces requisite to govern well, according to his Spirit. But when we perceive that we have neither the Love of God as to his Regard of us, nor as to a Testimony in our own Conscience, nor yet in our Works, for the Edification of our Neighbour, we ought never to presume that we are call'd of God for any State or Office. It is rather to be believed that we are push'd to it of our selves, through Presumption; and when we do not govern by the Direction of God (a) we fall from one Fault into another, without knowing it. Our Natural Instinct makes us to govern all by Human Principles. That of the Devil makes us to act according to his Principles. And thus we commit threefold Evils when we do not govern purely by the Principles of Jesus Christ. It were better to be Pastors of Sheep than of Souls, and to be Subjects than Lords; for he who is in Employments, Offices or Benefices, will not only render an account of his own Soul, but (b) also of those whom he has under his Charge. A Pilgrim is well pleas'd to have no Burthens. He travels the more lightly when he has nothing but his own Body to bear, and accomplishes his Journey the sooner. Even so it is as to the present Times, in which nothing can be done any longer for the Glory of God. It were better for a Man to work out his own Salvation, than to charge himself with Offices or Benefices, which, if we remark narrowly, are sought for, either for our Honour, or our Pleasure, or our Interest, all which are vain and earthly Ends, unworthy of a true Christian, who ought only (c) to seek the Kingdom of Heaven, since Jesus Christ has promised to give him the rest, which is but a contemptible thing.

I said to her: That I was wholly prepar'd to quit all Offices and Benefices, if I knew that it were the Will of God: That I would desire rather to save my self, than to possess all the Wealth in the World.

(x) *Job* 1. 8. (y) *Job* 27. 6. 1 *Cor.* 4. 4. (z) 2 *Cor.* 5. 11.
 (a) *Fer.* 23. 21, 22. (b) *Heb.* 13. 17. (c) *Matth.* 6. 33.

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She said: This is a good Design, Sir; but if you wait till an Angel from Heaven come to tell you that this is the Will of God, you will never do it; for God has no Will to make you leave it more than he had any to make you undertake it. It concerns every one to examine what Mean will be most proper for him to facilitate his Salvation. One may sufficiently perceive in his Conscience, without consulting any Body, whether Offices, Estates and Benefices have been to us the means of more Union with God than if we had not possess'd them; and if they have made us draw others to the same Union. If we do not find this, it is to be feared that our Offices and Benefices have not been sought for or possess'd for the Love of God, but for some Human Accommodation, which respects nothing but the Earth. This being discover'd, it is in your Will to resolve, if now you desire to labour for Heaven, or rather for the Earth.

I said to her, That I would not pretend any longer to any thing upon Earth; that I was very sorry that I had had some Pretensions thereto, but that I durst not quickly abandon all, without the Advice of some learn'd Person, fearing that I might do evil.

She replied: Sir, You are yet far from the Kingdom of Heaven, when you will needs advise with Men if you shall follow Jesus Christ. Has not he said (d) *He who leaves not Father and Mother, and his own self, cannot be his Disciple?* Now would you go to ask Counsel of any Man, when Jesus Christ has given you his? Where could you find better? Men are all interested in their own Judgment, and will never advise but what they judge most advantageous for Men, they having no Light to perceive any other thing. They are Flesh, and judge according to the Flesh. Would you refer what concerns the Salvation and Perfection of your own Soul to their Judgments? You must needs perish with them: For the (e) *Wisdom of Man is foolishness before God.* All the Evils of the World do proceed from this, That Men are govern'd and advised by one another. Is it not said somewhere, (f) *Wo to the Man that puts his Confidence in Man?* I have also told you (g) *That if the Blind lead the Blind, both shall fall into the*

(d) *Luke 14. 26, 33.* (e) *1 Cor. 3. 19, 20.* (f) *Jer. 17. 5.*
(g) *Matth. 15. 14.*

Discb. For my part, I can say in Truth, That I do not remember that I ever committed any Faults, but when I believ'd the Counsel of Men. We ought to go to the Source, Sir, and let alone the Streams. The Gospel is left us in Writing for our Eternal Rule. If the Apostles and other Disciples of Jesus Christ had gone to ask Counsel of Men, they would never have follow'd him: For Men would have call'd it a Folly to abandon all, as they do yet to this Day: For being of the Earth, they respect nothing but the Earth, and are blind in the things of the Spirit. We can never do ill to follow the Counsels of the Gospel, but indeed we may in following the Counsels of Men, how learn'd soever: For their Doctrines are of this World (*b*), and that of Jesus Christ is of God.

The Seventeenth Conference.

How to discern whether the Motions which do press us to leave the Outward Hindrances to Divine Communion, be from God or not. That there are likewise Inward Hindrances; and that one ought not to be wedded even to good Means.

I Said to her, That I had not Light enough to be sure of my own Motions, and to discern whether they are from God, or from the Devil, or from my self.

She said: That it was good to discern them: (*i*) that the Motions from God do incite, always to humble things, which the Devil and Nature do oppose, because they are things despised by Men; and therefore these Enemies do abhor them. What comes from God, incites to Sufferings and to Patience; the things which come from the Devil and from Nature do incite to seek our Ease and Pleasures, without desiring to suffer any thing. The things of God do lead to Poverty and Self-denial; the Devil and the Flesh

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do desire Riches, and seek to be esteem'd and praised: In fine, Sir, says she, what comes from God is always conformable to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ: For God cannot be contrary to himself. Therefore the Light which you have receiv'd, that moves you not to seek any longer for any thing upon Earth, is but too sufficient to assure you that this Morion comes from God; because neither the Devil nor Nature would ever rid themselves of their Pretensions upon each: For they cannot profit by any other thing: Nature could not sin any more without aiming at earthly things; and the Devils could have no hold of a Soul which did not aim any longer at any thing upon Earth: We might walk surely on such a Resolution, without waiting for Counsel from Men, who with their Wisdom do often quench the Lights of the Holy Spirit. It were far better to consult the Gospel.

I was constrained to yield to such Truths. I said to her, that I would abandon all, and would follow her all the Days of my Life.

She said with Joy: Sir, How happy will you be to abandon all? Your Soul will be at liberty to fly unto God: Your Spirit will be calm and your Body better disposed. You will experience thereby both Bodily and Spiritual Good: But I intreat you, do not resolve to follow me always; for, as for my self, I am willing to die alone; and as for your concern, it will be a greater Perfection ⁽¹⁾ that you be disingaged from all Creatures, to the end you may wait upon God alone. All Company, how perfect soever it be, is not God. He requires our Heart so pure, that he does not suffer that it should be divided. So long as I can be helpful to you, I love indeed to discourse with you: But I wish rather that you may speak with God, who is the Fountain of all Light. He can teach you more in one Moment than all the Men of the World would do in a thousand Years. So soon as you shall have found his Conversation, you will not be able to take Pleasure any longer in any other. Speak to him always, Sir, until that he answer you. He will do it assuredly. According as you shall separate your self from the Creatures, accordingly you draw the nearer unto God: There needs but to remove the Hindrances, and this Divine Sun will shine fully

(1) *Pal.* 73. 25, 26.

into our Souls, warming them with his Love. He has (m) infinitely more Desire and Affection to receive us, than we have to seek him, even tho' we be great Sinners; he rejects no body, he rather embraces them as the Father did his Prodigal Son. You are his Child, and the Work of his Hands. Go to your Father with great Confidence: He loves you: He seeks you and calls you. Do not delay any longer: Go forward, seek no longer for any other thing but him alone.

With extream Joy did I hear this Discourse, asking her by what means I might find this Communion with God, and what I ought to do to attain to so great a Happiness.

She replied: Sir, There are very few things to be done, but there are many things to be left and parted with. It is a great Point to quit Honours, Offices and Dignities; but these are all things without us. There are also within us which hinder the Operation of God, such as (n) the covering of all that pleases our Eyes, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life. If we could part with these things, we would presently find God. For, if our Soul had no hindrances, it would fall into him, even as a Stone cast from on high falls into its Centre, which is below. (o) Our Soul has God for its Centre; it can never repose it self but in him. Therefore we can find no Rest nor Satisfaction in the things of this World, which do only pull us out of our Centre, which is God. But if we could part with that Covetousness, that Concupiscence, and that Pride which we have in our Heart, we would find our selves swallowed up in God, without knowing how. There is no need of doing much to find God, because he offers himself (p) always of himself. But we must labour to remove the Hindrances which our Vicious Affections do give him. In this the (q) Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, for we cannot without Violence quit our evil Habits. God, in the mean time, does well deserve that we should force our selves to find him, so much the more, that by our Wickedness we have so basely forsaken him for things of so small Continuance: For all that can be covered in this World passes away like the Smoak (r): And what can the Lust of the

(m) Luke 15. 20. (n) 1 Joh. 15. 16. (o) Prov. 4. 23. (p) Rev. 3. 20. (q) Luk. 16. 16. (r) Jam. 4. 14.

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Flesh give us, but Pains and Corruption? The Pride of our Heart is nothing but a meer Blast of Wind, which puts nothing within us. And these so inconsiderable things do nevertheless oppose themselves to God, building, as it were a strong Wall (s) between our Soul and him, which hinders us from hearing his Voice and his Word. There are no other means but to break it down by Force of Combat.

I ask'd her, ; To what Place I should retire, since she would not that I should follow her ?

She said to me: Sir, You will be well enough in any Place, provided you be with God. There is no Part nor Place that can sanctify you, but rather a Disengagement from your self. The World is great, and God is everywhere. It is not meet to affect a particular Place. It were better to roul from one Place to another ; since we are Pilgrims upon Earth, let us walk always towards our Centre, without considering in what Place we are lodg'd, for the so small Time that our Life is to continue. Jesus Christ had no house (t) of his own, yea not a Stone whereon to rest his Head. So much the more as we are disengag'd, so much the more shall we be united unto God. And this is the only Reason why I do not desire your Company, because I am nothing but a mere Creature, as you are, not a God, from whom you ought to look for all things.

I said to her : That her Company had done me great good ; That I had reason to desire it as the true mean of attaining to Union with God.

She said to me : Sir, So long as you rest upon any Means, you will never arrive at the End : Means are good to be made use of, as we would make use of a Way to travel to some Place ; but they are not good to be relied upon. Many Souls are deceived in this, who have stopt in the midst of the Race, and never found God, because they rested upon the Means : How Holy and Perfect soever the Means may be, they are never God, and we ought not (u) to rest but upon him alone. The Devil has likewise so many Holds, when he finds us wedded to any thing. He makes Mercury of every Wood. But when we are free of Matter and adhere to God only, he cannot take Hold of us on any Side.

(s) *Is.* 59. 2. (t) *Luke* 9 58. (u) *1 Cor.* 3. 21, 22.

The Eighteenth Conference.

How we may attain to Perfection and to Communion with God, resigning our selves wholly to him, quitting both Human Learning and the being Taught of others for a Time. Christians incapable of being taught. They will be more desolate than the Jews.

I Entreated, That, before I parted with her, she would tell me in particular all that I ought to do, to have Communion always with God: That she ought to give me all Saving Instructions.

She says: Sir, God sufficeth you, and Jesus Christ is your Master (x); seek no other Means. He is (y) the Way, the Truth and the Life. He has omitted nothing in his Gospel for the Teaching us all things: His Word is the Bread (z) which is come down from Heaven, for the Nourishment of our Souls. Do not seek any other Pasture; because there are now so many wild Herbs, which are poysonous. Feed only upon the Words which give Life (a), and you shall never die. If your Soul be entertaining itself with God, he will make it see all that it ought to do and avoid, more clearly than we perceive sensible Objects. Resign your self to him (b) and he will always guide you aright. Be not careful any longer for any thing; when you forsake all you shall find all. I have thus experienc'd it: According as I disingag'd my self from earthly things, at the same Time God replenish'd my Soul with Light and with Consolation. I can give you no other Instructions but those which I have experienc'd. I doubt not but you know much more than I: but your Wisdom is Human. When you govern'd, it was but by Human and Natural Principles: All that Wisdom

(x) *Matth.* 23. 8. (y) *Jeb.* 14. 16. (z) *Job.* 6. 50. (a) 8.
51. (b) *Psal.* 37. 5.

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must now be forsaken, since Jesus Christ says, That he (c) will destroy it; and as a Child you must embrace the Gospel-Simplicity, for he says, (d) *If we be not converted, and become as little Children, we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Leave therefore all your Studies, Sir, and hear what God will teach you, and follow him. Hereby you will be the most wise in the World: For if you continue your Studies, they will serve you for great Hindrances. If you have resolved to quit your Benefices, quit also your Sciences: For they have not made you to know God, nor yet your self. Therefore you have no reason to love them; but rather to abandon them.

I ask'd her, If I ought not to preach any more, nor to teach any Person, seeing I might now do it with more Perfection than I had done it formerly; for I had receiv'd by her Discourse much Light of the Truth, and of Falshood.

She says: Sir, Do not teach any Body until you have found Communion with God: For how can you give to another what you do not possess your self? You have made so many useless Sermons, and so many Teachings without Profit for your self or others: There is Time enough lost, you ought now to employ it well. You believe that you can do it with more Perfection than formerly: Which I doubt very much; for if you think to teach the People the Evangelical Life, and do not observe it your self, *this* is (e) worse than to hold your Peace, because every one will have Ground to believe that it is nothing but a Formality, which must be observ'd in declaring the Gospel, and that there is no need to put it in Practice, seeing they who teach it do not practise it themselves. I think in this Case it were better to be ignorant of it (f) than not to practise it when we know it: At least, it is a less Evil never to have understood it, than to have known it and not to practise it; tho' both are evil, because all Christians are oblig'd to know the Gospel, for we cannot without Guilt be ignorant of it; but to hear it so often, and for all this not to desire to follow it, is a double evil, because of the Ingratitudes which are committed in not practising what we know by the Grace of God. It is a Grace to be

(c) 1 Cor. 1. 19. (d) *Matth.* 18. 3. (e) *Psal.* 50. 16, 17.
(f) 2 Pet. 2. 21.

taught, and an Ingratitude not to follow Instructions. Therefore you will do nothing but spend your self in Teaching, and will not replenish others: Besides, that in Teaching there is always the Hazard of Vain-Glory, because Flattery (g) is the Ruine of our Souls; and persuades us that we have that which they say we have.

I said unto her: That infallibly many would put in Practice the Doctrine of the Gospel, if they knew it as I do at present, because these Truths are so clear, that of necessity one must yield to them.

She said: Sir, Do not engage your self to declare the Truths which God now makes known to you: For they will not be well receiv'd by the Learn'd. You ought first to have overcome all Human Regards; which you have not yet done. Likewise you must have the Courage to expose your Life for this Truth. For otherwise you will be oppress'd without any Profit; because they would outrageously persecute you if you should declare the naked Truth of the State of the Church at present; and if you teach, that to be a true Christian, one must observe the Doctrine of the Gospel, they will altogether oppose you, and will affirm, That all they who are baptiz'd are Christians, however Wicked they be. Thus you will have much to suffer, and will profit others nothing: Because all that you might build up by Teaching of the Truth, the Learn'd will destroy by their Arguments, and will easily dissuade People from believing you, even rejecting your Doctrine as Evil and Seditious; for they study nothing so much as to flatter the World (h), and speak as they are desirous to hear. They have forgotten that Jesus Christ said by his Apostle, That (i) he who would please men is not the Servant of Jesus Christ. There can be no Preaching any longer without Reproof, but what flatters the Ear, and is agreeable to the People; for the Truth which (l) reproves is so disapproved by Men, that I believe, Sir, if you should speak publicly the Truths which I in confidence have told you, they would cut you off from the Church, declaring you an Heretick; yea, they would even pursue you to Death, because they could not approve the Truth without condemning themselves, their Lives being contrary thereto;

(g) Prov. 27. 14. 2 Th. 2. 5. (h) 2 Tim. 4. 3, 4. (i) Gal. 1. 10. (l) J. 59. 14, 15.

and no Body hates his own Soul: Therefore they condemn others.

I ask'd her: If I ought always to continue idle, without doing any thing, seeing I could not Teach nor Preach any more, and that I had no other Employment, for that I had pass'd all my Life-Time in Study, and in the Direction of Souls.

She said: Sir, Labour first for your own Perfection, until you be entirely united to God, and then you will be capable of other things. If there be no Profit to be reap'd among the Catholicks, you may go among the Heathens, and Hereticks, who will be more disposed to receive the Truth than those who are under the Roman Church: Because others sin through Ignorance, and these Romanists through Malice. Many Heathens would follow the Truth if they knew it, and likewise divers Hereticks, because they seek and ask it always. Therefore we hear them dispute willingly, to shew that they are not at Rest, but seek and ask always after the Truth. But (m) the Catholicks do opinionately presume of their Salvation, because they esteem themselves the People of God, as they are truly, even as the Jews were, who are now abandon'd, but shall be converted (n) so soon as the Roman Church shall be overthrow'n. Those will be truly capable of receiving the Spirit of Truth, acknowledging their Errors and Ignorances. Labour, in the mean Time, Sir, for your own Perfection, and you will very shortly see that the Harvest will be ripe, and that there will be need of Workmen. We approach so near, that I fear your Soul will not have so soon acquir'd its own Perfection, as these things will come to pass. Therefore make haste, fearing to be sent away as an unprofitable Servant. Occupy the Talent which God has given you, for he will come very shortly to demand an account of it. Apply your self to your own Perfection with the same Earnestness wherewith you formerly applied to the Perfection of others, without any Profit.

I ask'd her, If she believ'd that the Roman Church would be Destroy'd and Ruin'd, and the Christians scatter'd as the Jews are at present?

(m) Rev. 3. 17. 18. 7. (n) Rom. 2. 25 ————— 29.
Rev. 19. 1 ————— 9.

She replied ; Yes, Sir, and much more, for the Jews have continued constantly in the Jewish Law ; tho' they be bodily scatter'd through all the World, they are, nevertheless united in an uniform Faith and Belief, holding still the Law which God had given them : But the Christians (o) have denied their Faith, tho' they be yet united Bodily : How would they preserve it in Time of Persecution, when all this Lustre and this Magnificence of the Church shall be destroy'd, so that there shall (p) not be one Stone upon another in its outward State, no more than there is at present in its inward ? This must needs (q) come to pass, Sir, else God would not be Just, for the Jews might Reproach him with Reason, That they never committed such an Infidelity against their God as the Christians do. It is very true, they kill'd the Body of Jesus Christ ; but that was through (r) Ignorance. The Christians do kill it a thousand times out of pure Malice. They believe that the same Body of Jesus Christ is in the Sacrament of the Altar, and they give it daily unto Whores, Thieves, Murtherers and Sorcerers ; and yet they make them believe that they shall thereby receive Graces. The Jews never believ'd that they obtain'd Grace in putting Jesus Christ to death, as these Christians do believe in receiving him unworthily : (s) For Pilate said that he found no Fault in him, and was in great Fear to condemn him : And the Christians go affrontedly to receive him, with a Soul full of Sins, believing, in the mean Time, that he is oblig'd to impart unto them his Graces, in Recompence of the Affronts which they do him. It must needs be, Sir, that all these Falshoods be discovered, and that God (t) shew the Villany of his People to all the World. If clear-sighted and illuminated Men would discover it, they would immediately be hated and (u) *slain between the Temple and the Altar* ; therefore the Judgments of God must discover them.

(o) *Luke* 18. 8. (p) *Matth.* 24. 2. (q) *Rev.* 19. 2. (r) *Afs* 3. 17. (s) *Matth.* 27. 23, 24. (t) *Ezek.* 16. 35 — 42. (u) *Matth.* 23. 34, 35.

The Nineteenth Conference.

That all Christians ought to Read the Holy Scripture. Whether the Church can Err? Where She is; Where not.

I said unto her: That the Jews and the Hereticks would be well-pleased to hear such Discourses, for they have some such Sentiments.

She said; Sir, I do not speak (x) to please any Body, and I regard neither Jews, nor Hereticks, nor Catholics, but the straight Truth, according as the Spirit of God manifests it to me. I have never conversed with Hereticks; but I have casually heard some things said of them which are much better than what the Catholics do: Tho' it were in nothing but this, That they take Pleasure to read the Holy Scriptures, and carry them everywhere with them, studying them almost Day and Night. This is a very laudable (y) thing; because we ought always to learn what we ought to practise: If we do not learn it we cannot know it (z). In the Bible the whole Law of God is contain'd, and also the Doctrine of Jesus Christ; from whence may be deriv'd all the Nourishment of our Souls. If the Hereticks do not put it in Practice, they do ill as well as the Catholics; but they have this Advantage, that they know the Truth if they will practise it. But the Catholics are only stor'd with Books compos'd by Men, and depriv'd of that which God hath given us for the Nourishment of our Souls: It is just the same as if we would take from a Child his Nourishment, and give him an Image to sustain him. He may look long upon it before his Body receive Nourishment and Substance from it. It seems to me a very ill thing to forbid Christians the Reading of the Bible in the Vulgar

(x) Gal. 1. 10. (y) Ps. 1. 2. (z) John 5. 39, 40.

Tongue, since (a) it must teach us all that we ought to do and forsake, and the Advertisements which God gives us, by his Holy Prophets, and by Jesus Christ himself and his holy Apostles.

I said unto her, That the Church had forbidden to read the Bible in the Vulgar Language, because of the Abuses which were thereby committed; for many ignorant Persons would interpret it amiss; from whence Heresies arise. Secondly, Because many Bibles were changed, and something taken away or diminish'd from the Original.

She replied: Truly, Sir, these are very weak Reasons: They forbid to read the Bible in the Vulgar Tongue, lest the common People do draw Heresies from it; while the most [part of Heresies are introduc'd into the Church by the Learned, Priests and Monks, not by Simple Ones, who would never be follow'd in their new Errors; for they would have but small Authority and Learning to Introduce them. If this Reason ought to have place, it would be more expedient to forbid it to the Learned, since they have invented all the Heresies, and not the Vulgar: (b) Jesus Christ taught the Simple People more than the Learn'd; to shew that he found them more capable and susceptible of receiving his Doctrine than the Great and the learned were. And if all Christians ought to practise the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, by the same Consequence, they ought to Read and to Learn it. And if they will needs forbid the Reading of it, because of the Abuses which are committed thereby, they must also forbid the going to Church and to the Communion, where there are a thousand times more Abuses committed, than can be committed by the Reading of the Holy Scriptures, which was not made for the Learn'd, but for (c) Saints, from whom Men will needs take it, shewing themselves more foreseeing than Jesus Christ, to hinder Abuses and Errors. If there were in the Church a Prohibition only to read the Bibles which are not approv'd of, there would be a Pretext to colour this Prohibition; but seeing all are forbidden, it is to forbid what God hath commanded.

I ask'd her; Whether the Church might indeed err in this Prohibition, or in any other thing?

(a) 2 Tim. 3. 16. (b) John 7. 48, 49. (c) 1 Cor. 2. 13, 14.

She said ; No, Sir, the True Church can never err, because God has promised that he will (d) always maintain it : But I would willingly know where the Church is at present. She can be no where but in the Souls (e) which possess the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. Behold this is the only Place where the Church resides. Who will shew me these Souls ? I would gladly know them, I would love and follow them even to Death. I have not yet found this Happiness. You believe it may be that it is the City of *Rome*, because *S. Peter* did reside there ; and for my part, I believe that *Rome* is (f) the *Babylon of Confusion* ; that the Holy Spirit does no more govern there than you see it in your Chapter. You have Judgment enough to discern if the Holy Spirit directs all the Resolutions which are there taken. He does it far less in the *Roman College* : For there he has no more Audience ; and if he should appear there in Form of a Dove (as he did at the Baptism of Jesus Christ) all these Presidents would cast their Caps at him to chase him away ; for they have no more to do with his Light, since they have made themselves Gods (g) upon Earth.

The Church therefore cannot err, but (h) the Men who are call'd *Churchmen* may err, and do truly err in this Prohibition, by which Christians cannot any longer read the Gospel nor the Bible, in which is contain'd the Law of God.

How then can they observe it, if they may not read it, in order to learn it ? This is an Error which no Body is oblig'd to follow, because the true Church cannot thus command it ; for it is contrary to the Doctrine of Jesus, who says, (i) *Take, eat, this is my flesh ; and drink, this is my Blood of the New Testament*, And these Men will not have us to touch it, but as far as it pleases them to give it : Whereas Jesus Christ says, *Take ye it, and eat ye it*. He speaks to every one.

(d) *Matth.* 16. 18. (e) *Joh* 8. 31. (f) *Rev.* 18. 5. (g) *Rev.* 18. 23. (h) *Jer.* 7. 4. *Mal.* 2. 7, 8. (i) *Matth.* 26. 26, 27, 28.

The Twentieth Conference.

Of the Word of Jesus Christ, which is truly his Flesh and his Blood. Of the Reading of the Holy Scripture, and of the forbidding it. How the Church cannot fail; and what is the Church, and what not.

I said to her: That these Words were understood of the Eucharist, where we drink his Blood and eat his Flesh.

She reply'd; What perfect Sense can you find wherein to apply these Words of the Lord unto the Eucharist, seeing he says, That (l) *he who eats his flesh and drinks his blood shall live for ever*, and yet so many thousand Persons, who commonly receive the Eucharist, do live and die in their Sins? It would follow that the Words of Jesus Christ were not true, when he says, *That they shall live for ever*. He has said elsewhere, That (m) *neither Whoremongers nor Drunkards shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. Nevertheless we see daily such Persons receive the Eucharist. Can they live for ever without entering into the Kingdom of Heaven? There would be a great Contradiction in the Words of Jesus Christ. He cannot save those whom he condemns, nor say to those who shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven that they shall live for ever. (n) It is assuredly his Word which he calls *his Flesh and his Blood*. For whosoever shall eat it, that is to say, incorporate it as the Nourishment of his Soul, it must needs be that he live for ever (o); for this Word gives Life Eternal; and he who feeds upon it as on his daily Bread can never die; this is *the Tree of Life*, seeing it gave Life to all things. This Word (p) has created Heaven and Earth of nothing:

(l) *Job. 6. 54.* (m) *1 Cor. 6. 10.* (n) *Job. 6. 63, 2 Job. 9, 50 Job. 8. 51.* (p) *Job. 1. 2. Heb. 1. 3,*

How should it not give Life unto the Soul which receives it? And if it have the Force to translate Bread into the Body of Jesus Christ, as they teach, how shall it not change our Souls into the Spirit of Life Eternal, if we receive and incorporate it as becomes? Jesus Christ said (q) *These are my Mother, my Sisters and my Brethren, who hear my Word and do it*: To shew that he esteems more the Receiving of his Word than the having contributed to the Formation of his Human Body, it being most certain that the Virgin Mary was more happy in receiving and doing his Word, than in being his natural Mother.

I said to her: That there were many Errors in the Church, if the Sense that she proposed ought to be received: That it was very clear and intelligible, but it had never been understood after this manner.

She said: Blessed be God, Sir, that he grants yet this Mercy to the World, to send his Light amidst the so obscure Darkness, into which it is brought at present. All the highest Mysteries of our Faith are involved in this Obscurity; nothing is understood in a perfect Sense, and they do often apply Senses contrary to the Truth. (r) They have walk'd as groping even till Now. It is no Wonder if they fall from one Error into another insensibly. It is a great Happiness that it has pleas'd God to let us live even until the Time that he comes to enlighten the World, after that so great a number have perish'd through Ignorance. We have no more deserv'd it than they. Let us endeavour to apply it rightly unto our Salvation, without letting the occasion slip, which is now so freely offered us. How many souls are there of such a tender Conscience, that they dare not reject a Sentiment which comes from the Roman Church, or any Decree of its College, fearing to offend God, because they look upon it and take it for the Holy Church? I knew a Person of a very good Life, a Doctor of Theology, who said, That if the Pope forbid him to read the Gospel, he durst not read it any longer: So much was he preoccupied with this Belief, that Rome is the Holy Church! Upon this Supposition all the most pious do follow that which is Evil, without perceiving it, because

(q) Luke 8. 21. (r) Is. 55. 9. 10.

they have taught us that we owe a blind Obedience: As if we were permitted to (s) follow Evil blindfold; which is a great Error: For we are all oblig'd to discern (t) whe her what we follow be good or bad. For Example; This Doctor could not abstain from Reading of the Gospel, without offending God highly, tho' the Pope had forbidden him to read it, because this Prohibition is contrary unto Jesus Christ, who has brought (u) his Word from Heaven, to be the Rule of our Life, and the Nourishment of our Souls; and has said, *That it* (x) *must abide in us for ever.* How could we cast it behind us because a Pope forbids it, who cannot destroy what God has establish'd, nor forbid what he has commanded, without being Antichrist? for all that is against Christ is assuredly Antichrist. We may indeed believe and follow what the Pope and his Councils do ordain us, when they are things conformable to the Law of God, and the Doctrine of Jesus Christ; which is no other thing but the Explication of the Law. Tho' this were taught us by the Devil himself, we could not do ill to follow it: But the things which are contrary ought never to be blindly follow'd. God has made us Reasonable Creatures, to the End we may discern Good and Evil. All the Blindness that a true Christian ought to have, is to (y) captivate his Spirit under the incomprehensible Works of God, not to captivate it to believe that that which is Evil is Good. A man must have lost Sense and Spirit to abandon himself to such a blind Obedience, which, nevertheless the most part of pious Christians do, who do yield in all things to the Ordinances of the Pope or of his Council. If this Mischief be not shortly at an End, and if the Truth be not discover'd in this Point, all the World will perish: Because many things will be determin'd which will be against God, tho' it were nothing but the Infallibility of the Pope. It contradicts directly the Truth; because no Man can ever be infallible how holy soever he may be. (z) S. Peter, the first Pope, did expressly deny his Master, and did really err (a) in dissembling, because of the Jews, for which S. Paul reproves him. Can it ever be said, without Blasphemy, that a Man is Infal-

(s) *Exod.* 23. 2. (t) *Phil.* 1. 10. (u) *Job.* 6. 32, 33. (x) *Ij.* 59. 21. *Matth.* 24. 35. (y) *2 Cor.* 10. 5. (ll) *Matth.* 26. 70. (a) *Gal.* 2. 11.

libile, seeing Infallibility appertains to God alone? Neither the Pope nor any other can err or fail in following the Doctrine of Jesus Christ; but in following their own judgments, or those like themselves, they may fail, and err greatly.

I ask'd her: How it was possible that God should have left his Church for so long a Time in Errors?

She said: Sir, God has not left his Church in Errors, she can never err nor fail; for she is one and the same (b) thing with God: As the Bridegroom is but one Flesh with his Spouse; even so the Church is but one Spirit with God: Therefore she can never be left in Errors, not for one Moment. But the Errors which I discover to you, Sir, are in Men, not in the Church, for the Church is no where but in the Souls which possess the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, who have never err'd so long as they abide in it. The Church is a Spiritual and Invisible Spirit, which renders it self visible by the Human Bodies which this Spirit animates. So long as these Bodies are animated and possess with this Spirit of Jesus Christ, they are all Members, which make up this Church: But if this Spirit withdraw himself, they are no more but Members of Flesh, not Members of the Church (c). Errors therefore are insinuated into these Members of Flesh, not into the Spirit of God. But whereas these Members of Flesh did possess formerly the Spirit of the Church, they have retain'd the Name (d) after having lost the Spirit; and their Souls being void of Faith (e) God takes no longer Pleasure in them, but they are abandon'd to the Spirit of Error. Not that God on his part leaves the Church to err; but these Men having forsaken their (f) God, have form'd a Church of Flesh, which cannot be the true Church, which is a pure Spirit (g); as God, who is not visible but by his Works, so the Church is not visible but by the Bodies of those who possess this Spirit. It appears sufficiently that what they now call the Church is not govern'd by Divine Principles, but by Human and Natural.

I ask'd her: Whether the Pope, the Cardinals, the Bishops, Prelates, Pastors, Priests, Monks and other Persons, making Profession of the Catholick Faith, were not the

(b) 1 Cor. 6. 17. (c) Rem. 8. 9. (d) Tit. 1. 16. (e) Heb. 10. 38. (f) Jer. 2. 13. (g) John 4. 23, 24.

Church? And if all these Members together do not make up a Church?

She said: No, Sir, all these Persons, tho' met and assembled in one and the same Place, do not make the true Church, so long as (b) they do not possess the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. It is nothing but an Assembly of Flesh, subject to Corruption. Every one acts there according to his own Sense. There they propose and resolve according to Human Arguments, not according to the Spirit of God, who is not to be found where things are manag'd only by Civil and Politick Measures, which do not regard the Glory of God, but human Accommodations. The holy Spirit does not animate so vile Subjects. Nevertheless, he governs always the true Church, in what Place soever it be: (i) He never abandons it. But who can discover it? It is so hid and unknown that no Body discerns it. It is a Treasure hid under the Earth, of which Jesus Christ has spoken by Parable, saying, That (l) *the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Treasure hid in the Earth; and that he who has discover'd it must sell all that he has to buy this Ground, that he may find this Treasure.* There is no Kingdom of Heaven, but in the Church; that is to say, There is no Salvation out of the Church; and not knowing where to find it, who can look for Salvation? It is no wonder, Sir, that I said unto you heretofore, That Paradise was shut; forasmuch as I cannot see where the Church is; and consequently where Salvation may be had. (m) It is a Vine which is cut even by the Root and Ground; We see indeed its Branches extended far enough; But they are nothing but dead Wood; being cut off from the Root, no Fruit can be any longer expected from them. The Members, which at present they call the *Church*, are cut off from the Root (n), which is Jesus Christ, which brought forth great Branches: But since they have been cut off from their Root, they are fit for nothing but to be cast into the Fire; which you will see very shortly, Sir, in case God give you yet some little Time to live.

(h) 2 *Job*. 9. (i) *Is.* 59. 21. (l) *Matth.* 13. 44. (m) *Psal.* 80. 9 — 17. (n) *John* 15. 4, 16. *Col.* 2. 7.

The Twenty First Conference.

Where the true Church is. Where God is. How he speaks to the Soul and the Soul to him; and how we ought to dispose our selves for this Divine Conversation.

I Ask'd her: If there was no fix'd Place, where we might find the Church? That, for my part, I would search for her, because I would seek to be saved.

She said to me: Sir, The Church is everywhere, where there are Souls possessing the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. There are no other Places proper or destin'd for the true Church to reside in. All those Persons who are call'd *Churchmen*, are as so many Stones, with which they have built a material Church, which serves now for the Offering of Sacrifice, and it may be shortly will serve for a Stable for Horses. These Stones and other Materials are not the Church, tho' they serve to the Structure of a Building, which may be both for Holy and Prophane Uses. Therefore, Sir, the Church is not to be sought for in any fix'd Place which is material, but in Spiritual Souls, who also cannot be found; because they are oblig'd to keep (o) themselves hid, as the Body of Jesus Christ did before his Passion: For they would do them no less Evil than they did to him; because the Envy of the Prelates is now far greater than was ever that of the Pharisees, who put Jesus Christ to Death. God gives you a holy Desire of seeking the Church, for he has said, (p) *Seek the Kingdom of Heaven, and the rest shall be added to you.* This is a Sign that the Church is not tied to any material Place; for then there were no need to seek it, but to go to the Place where it is. For Example: If the Church were at *Rome*, there were no need to seek it, We would know assuredly where

(o) *If.* 26 20. (p) *Matth.* 6. 33.

it were. Since Jesus Christ says, it must be sought, this is indeed a Sign that it is hid and unknown. And likewise all they who seek *Rome*, do not for this receive all the rest in Gift, since so many things are wanting to them, even after they are *Romanists*. Which would not befall a true Christian, who would be content with what were purely necessary, with which God would always infallibly provide him.

I said to her: That I was not truly satisfied for the Good of my own Soul: That I would willingly know, where I might find the True Church, that I might have Salvation.

She replied: Sir, (q) The Church is within you. If you seek the Kingdom of Heaven only, let Jesus Christ reign in your Soul by his Doctrine, then the Kingdom of Heaven will be in your Soul, God being there. He reigns always where he is. He would reign in all the Souls of Men, if they did not put Hindrances thereto. The Centre of our Souls is God, who being Salvation and Life, we ought not to seek without us the Church nor the Kingdom of Heaven. For he is not an Earthly and Temporal God, but Celestial and Eternal. The Church being the Word of God (r), it is in us, since he cannot be without his Word, as we are always in the Place where we speak. He is not Earthly; for Jesus Christ says, That (s) his Kingdom is not of this World: It is therefore a heavenly Kingdom which is in us, because God is there, whose Kingdom is Celestial and Eternal. Where then would you seek the Church and the Kingdom of Heaven but in the Centre of your Soul? That is the certain Place of its Residence (t). We may be deceiv'd in all other things, but not in this infallible Truth. If every one had sought the Church and the Kingdom of Heaven in the Centre of his Soul, there would not have been so many Persons deceiv'd. Since they have sought God without themselves in so many divers means, they have gone astray from him by the same means by which they ought to find him; and whilst they sought for the Church in so many Masters, Doctors and Directors, they have stray'd from that which is Holy, to follow a Terrestrial and Carnal Church. By this the Devil has reaped much, and replenish'd his infernal Granaries to our Dam-

(q) *Luke 17. 21.* (r) *Job. 17. 17.* (s) *Job. 18. 36.* (t) *Eph. 3. 16, 17.*

mage. Therefore I intreat you, Sir, that you would not seek for the Church in any other Place but in the Centre of your Soul (u): For there is so much Deceit under the Mask of Piety, that the most knowing are catch'd by it. Many are made Saints who are of the Synagogue of Satan (x).

I said to her: That I had not that Method to discern and find God in the Centre of my Soul; entreating she would declare to me the way how I might find him there.

She said; Sir, you will see him by the Eyes of Faith. If you believe that God is everywhere, he is also truly in your Soul, and even in a special and particular manner, as a thing which is most like to him. He is in the Elements, giving them Being and Subsistence, else they could not subsist. He is in the Herbs, Trees and other Plants, in giving them Vegetation. He is in the Animals, giving them Life as he does our Bodies: For if God were not in all these things, they would resolve into the same Nothing, from whence they have been taken; for no created thing can keep so much as one Plant of an Herb in Life. It is God that does all. We see this with our Natural Eyes; how much more firmly ought we to believe that he is in our Soul, which is Divine and Incomprehensible? This Quality comes nearer to God than any other Creature: We cannot comprehend what a Soul is, no more than we can comprehend what God is. It has Qualities so approaching to him, that it may with Reason be call'd a dependent Deity: For we see indeed the Works which it operates in our Body; but we cannot see what it is but by its Operations, as we cannot know God or perceive what he is but by the Works which he produces to our Knowledge. Our Soul gives Motion to our Body, and Agility to our Understanding, makes the Memory to remember, and moves all the other Powers of the Soul. We feel and see that this is done in us; nevertheless no Body can comprehend how this is done, but we must confess that our Soul is a thing incomprehensible, as well as God; and since there cannot be many Gods, we must conclude that God is the Centre of Souls, and that they spring from him as a Branch from the Root. And as Trees cannot bear Branches without having a Root, so the Soul cannot

(u) *Matth. 24. 26.* (x) *Rev. 3. 9.*

have a Being if God do not give and produce it. By which you may abundantly perceive, Sir, that of necessity God is the Centre of our Soul, and that it cannot move but by him (*y*), no more than the Body moves it self but by the Motion of our Soul. This being so, we ought therefore to seek God where he is, and he being no where so expressly as in the Centre of our Soul, it is there (*z*) that he must be sought, as in the true Place of his Residence. And if you ask me the Method and the Way, to find him in the bottom of your Soul, there is no other, but to remove all the Hindrances, casting out of your Soul all earthly Affections, that you may have no other but for him. Your Soul will no sooner be free from all these Earthly Affections, than it will fall into God, as the Stone falls into its Centre. I know no other Method but this Disengagement from our selves, and from all other things, to find God, and to become one with him. I have sometimes sought him without me, by Actions which did seem good; but I have since remark'd, that those serv'd for Distractions; and the more I acted outwardly, so much the more did I stray from my God. Therefore, Sir, become wise by my Loss, and do not lose your Time in seeking means out of your self; for they serve us often for Hindrances. Our Soul is his true Temple (*a*) and the Place of his Rest. Let us only remove all that is between him and our Soul, and we shall see him Face to Face, to speak after our manner: That is to say, we shall see him clearly by Faith, and shall know him by the Operations which he will make in us, and shall taste him by the Repose and Consolation of our Conscience.

I thought that I understood well enough this Truth, and that Faith dictates to us that God is the true Centre of our Soul: But to taste him, and speak sensibly to him, by his Operations and Notices, this was above my Capacity; entreating her to tell me how this was done.

She said to me: Sir, The Soul is a Spirit, and God is a Spirit, and communicates himself in Spirit, not with verbal Words but spiritual Motives: Which, nevertheless are more intelligible than the finest Eloquence of the World. God communicates himself to the Soul, as the Sun to his Rays; and the Soul to its God, as the Rays to

(*y*) *Acts* 17. 28. (*z*) *Is.* 26. 9. (*a*) *1 Cor.* 3. 16, 17.

the Sun, by the great Unity and Dependence there is between God and the Soul. When once it is denuded of its self it has no more need of Sight or Mouth to understand God, than we have need of Words to understand our own Conceptions. So soon as the Soul is disingag'd from it self it is so transform'd into God, that it is entirely swallow'd up in him, and becomes one thing with him, having no longer any Will but his, nor Desires but what he wishes; and it does not move it self any longer but by the Motions of God: So that the Soul and God are not any more but one and the same thing: And if you do not taste God, and understand not his Will, it is assuredly because there is yet some Hindrance. Do not afflict your self for this, Sir, but take the Pains to disingage your Soul as much as is possible for you. This is all that you can do. For to be troubled that you do not feel nor understand the Motions of God, would be a Presumption; for if your Soul were capable of it, God would abundantly give it. He wants your Disingagement, fearing that you would abuse his Graces in living yet to your self.

I was wholly ravish'd with Pleasure to hear how God communicates himself to the Soul: But perceiving that I was yet far from this Happiness, I ask'd her, By what means I might be disingag'd from my self, and from every other thing, that my Soul might taste God?

She said to me: It is very easie, Sir, to be disingag'd from every thing, by considering what it is. For if we were not distracted and wandering in our Mind, it would be impossible that we could love our selves or other created Things. We cannot do it but through a Diversion (or straying) of the Mind: For if we seriously reflect and consider what we love in loving our selves or other Creatures, we must confess that we are Senseless. For what do we in loving our selves? we love a thing very Miserable, Impotent, Unconstant and of short continuance, there being no created thing more subject to all sorts of Miseries than we are in our selves, nothing more changing, nothing more weak, nothing more perishing. Is this capable of our Love? An Abridgment of all sorts of Miseries, more infirm than any Animals! and the things which are without us are yet of far less consideration. If we love Meat and Drink, is there any thing more frail for as soon as we have swallow'd them they are corrupted and chang'd into Putrefaction. If we love the Pleasures

of the Sight, this is a thing that passes in a Moment, and cannot give Satisfaction. The more we would satisfy our Senses, the more they thirst; for the (b) *Eye is never satisfied with seeing; no more than the Ear with hearing.* Even so of the Lust of the Flesh; These are all insatiable things, of the nature of Salt-Water; the more we drink of it, the more we thirst. And, as for the Pride of Life, what does it put in us but a Blast of Wind? For if a Woman bow, or a Man be discovered in our Presence, what does that give us? These are all but imaginary Goods, which put nothing in him that loves them. If we would search into these Truths, it would be very easie to strip us of our selves, and of all created Things: For they are not at all lovely, but to those who have lost their Wits. Our Soul is created for things more great. It ought not to debase its self to Objects so unworthy of its Love. It is very easie to forsake our selves, and all things, when we enter into the Consideration of things that are everlasting. All our Amusements proceed from this, that we come not to the Knowledge of God and our selves: For if we knew God we could not any longer love any other thing (c); and if we knew our selves, we would hate our selves and all things, because we have nothing in our selves which is not (d) hateful. Thus all the Love which we bear to our selves and to other things, proceeds from pure Ignorance and the want of Serious Reflection on our selves, and on all created Things.

I ask'd her; How I might make this Serious Reflection and discover the Nothingness of all created Things: And said, That I must acknowledge her Saying was true, that there is nothing worthy of our Love: But I could not discover the cause of the Blindness of my Mind in this, since I had a Desire to discover the Truth, and to be taken up entirely with God.

She said: Sir, the Fault of your Straying, as that of all the World, proceeds from this, That Men amuse themselves with the speculation of visible and sensible things by which they forget the invisible and spiritual: And thus they go on always in a (e) Forgetfulness of God and of their own Salvation. Men do even serve for a Hindrance to one

(b) *Ecc.* 1. 8. (c) *Joh.* 4. 10, 14. 1 *Joh.* 4. 7, 8. (d) *Tit.* 3. 3. (e) *1 J.* 5. 12, 13.

another: For being all full of these Distractions and Wandrings of Mind, they speak almost of no other thing. One speaks of his Health, another of his Meat, another of that which seems fair and good to him: And thus they fill one another's Minds with earthly Idea's, and they neglect the consideration of heavenly things, upon which alone their Happiness depends. That Application of Spirit which we give to our selves, to others, to our Affairs, Business or other things, which respect only this present Life, do rob us of that Time and Attention which appertains to God: For we are not created (f) for this present Life, but only (g) to live for ever with God. If we are oblig'd to remain here for some space of Time, this is only to satisfy the Justice of God; who being offended by us, has destin'd this short Life for the time of our Penitence: which being finish'd, he will pardon us, and restore us into our true Country, which is his Presence. We ought continually to aspire after it, without pleasing our selves in our Exile and Prison. What Folly, to take Pleasure in Sufferings! The Riches, the Honours and the Pleasures of this World are all troublesome and painful things, and we reckon them for Happiness! We glory even in our Chains and Fetters! Our Sin has discovered our Nakedness, and its Shame has oblig'd us to cover our Body; and this same Covering which ought to serve us as matter of continual Confusion, serves us, on the contrary, for Vain-Glory, which is altogether foolish, since our Habits are the Marks of Sin, and we wear them to glory in them.

If you desire, Sir, to discover these Truths, and to be entirely taken up with God, fix your Understanding on the Consideration of all the things which are not God; and you will find them all Vain and Transitory, even your Life it self: It passes every Moment, and ought rather to be call'd Death than Life, for we die daily: And from thence ascend to the Consideration of God and of our Soul, which are things Solid and Eternal. You will by this Mean be oblig'd to love the one and forsake the other. But you can never make these serious Remarks, if you do not quit the Commerce of Men, and abstain from all that is unprofitable, and what does not avail for the Glory

(f) 1 Cor. 15. 19. (g) Wisd. 2. 23.

of God. By the means of these Omissions, you will acquire a clear Understanding of the Truth, and a continual Communion with God: For the Cause of our Blindness of Mind proceeds from this, that we divert our selves always with Men, or the other Creatures, who do distract us from the Knowledge of God and of our selves. For all that is not God, is nothing.

The Twenty Second Conference.

That no true Contentment can be had but in God alone: How to return thither: Of Gifts: And of those which are made to Churches, which will perish.

I Receiv'd a great deal of Light by such firm Reasonings, to which all Men of the World must needs yield. I said to her, That I found only a Difficulty to withdraw my self from all things, and to think of God only, because our Spirit does easily wander.

She said: Sir, all the Difficulty there is in doing this, is only in our Imagination, for in the Practice there is great Contentment. For he who entertains himself always with God (g) is in a continual Feast, more pleasant even to the Senses than the most sumptuous earthly Banquet would be: For the Soul having full Satisfaction, the Spirit is in Peace and the Body at rest, all the Senses having a Satiety and Contentment; whereas in the Commerce of Men, none of them can find full Satisfaction; for as long as the Soul does not repose in its God, it is like a Stone in the Air, which never rests until it have found its Centre; or like a Fish that is out of the Water, which remains without Vigour, dries up and dies if it be not put into it again. Even so, a Soul which is out of God, dries up (b) and dies, not being able to find true Contentment, even as to the Body,

out of him. There is nothing but a Life truly Christian, that is free and pleasant, for it (i) flows from God the Fountain of all Joy and Pleasures. An Human Life is a Life of Constraint. The Life of Sinners is a Life of Slavery. There is none but the Life of a true Christian that is fill'd with Delights. The Human Life must force it self, for to maintain it self aright in State and Honour, and constrain its Nature and its Inclinations, to yield unto and please Men, fearing to offend or disoblige them; therefore we are often constrained to bow as a Reed under the Power of the Great, or those in Authority, having no more Liberty than the Good or Bad Opinion of Men gives us.

The Life of a Sinner is (l) a real Slavery, for he is tortur'd with his own Passions, which do often serve as an Executioner both to Body and Soul, destroying both the one and the other. What Pain is there in doing Evil? What Displeasures and Remorse when the Evil is done! How is a Sinner hated by others, and a Burthen to himself? He has not sometimes the Freedom to speak or lift up his Head, for fear his Sin be discovered. Is it not therefore more easie to abandon all, and to entertain our selves only with God, than to undergo the Yoke of a Human or of a Sinful Life? Seeing he who is resign'd to God lives as a Child, without Care, who is carried in the Arms of his Father. He fears nothing (m) being under the Guard of the Almighty; he desires nothing more (n), for he has found all. He can seek nothing, because all things are found in God: Riches, Beauty, Honour, Pleasure, all are there in abundance (o).

The Soul is joyful, the Heart content, and the Body in Repose. How can you find Difficulty, Sir, in a thing agreeable and full of all Good! It should rather be found in the Life which you lead: Tho it be honest, yet it is subject to a thousand Disquiets and Cares to maintain you aright, and to please every Body.

To quit all things is to quit very little for to find the All. And not to think but upon God is to do that which naturally we would do upon the ceasing of the eagerness of our Imagination, which frames to it self some

(i) *Rom.* 14. 17. (l) *Job.* 8. 23. *Rom.* 6. 16, 18, 22. (m) *Pf.* 91. (n) *Pf.* 73, 25, 26. (o) *Prov.* 8. 14, 21.

imaginary Pleasure in the Conversation of Men, which is nevertheless interwoven with a great many Displeasures and Discontents. All this may be overcome by retiring our Spirit with God.

I said to her: That I wish'd nothing more than to find my self in so happy a State, which would yield me Communion with God. That for this cause I would willingly abandon a thousand Worlds: Begging she would tell me in order what I ought to do for the first.

She said: Sir, After that you shall have wholly abandon'd the World, present your self before God as the Prodigal Son (p), acknowledging that you have wasted so many Graces, which he had imparted to you, that you might love him, and that you have applied them to please Men. Tell him plainly that you have sinned against him and Heaven: And then he will give you the first Robe of Innocence in imbracing you as his Son. Resign your self wholly to him, as a Child newly born again, and then he will govern you in all your Ways; learning you to speak, to walk, to eat, and all the rest that hitherto you did not know how to do aright; for if you walk'd, it has been to seek Temporal Things; and if you have eaten, it was but for the Maintenance of your Body; and if you spoke, it was only to please or satisfy Men: All which things are Vain, and Unworthy of a true Child of God. Quit therefore, Sir, all your old Habits, and suffer your self now to be conducted by God, who is your true Father. Receive (q) from him what shall befall you. If Prosperities come upon you, (r) bless him; if Adversities, receive them with Joy; (s) for he had no other things, whilst in this World, but Tribulations. Esteem your self happy to imitate him (t). Seek no longer any other thing but what (u) God shall permit to befall you, and then you will find that the Lord is good and gracious. (x) Tho' Tribulations seem sometimes bitter, yet they are made sweet by the Conformity of the Life of Jesus Christ. Pains suffered with Jesus Christ are rendred agreeable. This Resignation to God is the first part of Blessedness, which draws along with it all the rest. When you shall be resigned to his Government you

(p) Luke 15. 18. (q) Job 2. 10. (r) Ps. 118. (s) Jam. 1. 2. (t) Acts 5. 41. (u) Phil. 4. 11, 12. (x) Phil. 1. 28, 29. 1 Pet. 4. 12, 13, 14.

will have no longer need of Masters or any other Helps: For he alone is your Protector in this Valley of Miseries, which will not last but for a Moment in respect of Eternity. (y) *Let us suffer with him, if we would reign with him.*

I ask'd: What I should do with my temporal Goods? if I should distribute them to the Poor, or to Churches, or rather to religious Convents?

She said; Sir, Keep your Temporal Goods for your Entertainment: For he who has not wherewith to maintain himself now-a-days, when Charity is dead, would have Vexations to seek and find it: So much the more that Justice requires rather to retain what we have lawfully acquired, for our own Nourishment, than to give it away, and to be oblig'd afterwards to ask of others. This Pretext of Voluntary Poverty hath introduc'd among the Religious great Avarice; for after having abandon'd their own, they seek with more Greediness the Wealth of Others than ever they did their own. Which obliges them to flatter People, and often to give way to evil, that they may have where withal to live, and they are unsatiable to augment and increase it. It is a kind of Robbery to take the Goods of others by way of Alms, when we have the Means to live upon our own. But if you have more than suffices for your Entertainment, distribute it to Christian Brethren, who have need of it, as the first Christians did, so that (z) no Body among them had need of any thing, because the Rich did impart to the Poor what was necessary for them: There being then no Proposal of Building so many Churches and Monasteries as at present, which are built more for the Commodity and Pleasures of Monks, than for the Glory of God, which does not consist in material Temples, as it does in the Living Temples of the Souls of true Christians. These are (a) the true Temples of God, where he will reside to all Eternity: But not in these Machines of Stone or Wood, which will perish very shortly with their Builder; who will be oblig'd to suffer Poverty by Force, since they would not suffer it voluntarily, according to the Vows and Promises which they make publickly of it. If at present you do not find true Christians, to whom to give of your Abundance, keep it, for the Love of God,

(y) 2 Tim. 2. 12. (z) Acts 4. 34. (a) 2 Cor. 6. 16.

until you shall know them. His Mercy will very shortly form a great number of them. For to give to the Wicked is to co-operate to their Vices.

Having remark'd that she spoke of the Destruction of Churches and Monasteries ; I ask'd her, If she believ'd that they would be shortly ruin'd ?

She said: Sir, I believe that God will very shortly grant this great Mercy to the World, which is very desirable, seeing that he cannot be known so long as this Lustre of Honour and Riches rules in the Church. She will never be holy till after (b) the Destruction of all these visible and magnificent Things, which have chas'd away the Holy Spirit, and have rendred it the *Babylon* of Confusion. God can never be glorified in the same Place where Men do attribute all the Glory to themselves ; and the Church, cannot subsist but by the Virtue and Holiness in which its lawful Bridegroom Jesus Christ did establish it. If she be joyned and allied with Honour and Riches, she has play'd the Adulteress, and deserves to be rejected by her lawful Husband, who has for so long a Time born with her Whoredoms, that they are come to a heighth, being become unsupportable to those who have fully discover'd them. How much more must they be so to the clear-sighted Eyes of her lawful Husband ? We ought to wait for, yea (c) to wish and desire those Ruins, which will discover where the true Christians are. This Mask of Hypocrisy being taken off, we will see them with open Face : Which will be a far less Evil ; because there will be far less of Deceit in it. It is now as in a Comedy, where the Servant acts the Part of a King ; and so soon as it is finish'd we will see indeed that the King was nothing but the Servant. Those who reign at present in the Church, being stript of their Apparel, it will then appear whether they are Prelates for God, or for Mony and Honour.

(b) *Rev.* 19. 1 — 9. (c) *Psal.* 137. 7, 8, 9. *Rev.* 6. 10.

The Twenty Third Conference.

Of the Destruction of the Church, and of the Uprightness of God in his Judgments, and in all that he does.

I ask'd her : If there was no way to appease God by Prayer or Penances, that this total Ruin of the Church might be prevented, which is replenish'd with so great a Number of Persons, as well of Priests as Religious, which make some say, that the Church was never so numerous, nor in so fine Order as now.

She reply'd: Sir, There were never so many Religious, and so little of Religion. It is of this great Diversity that Jesus Christ said (d), *Do you see all these things ? I tell you, there shall not be left one Stone upon another, that shall not be overthrown.* The Temple of Jerusalem was only the Figure of the Church, of which Jesus Christ spoke in a perfect Sense, saying, That all these Orders, all these Priests, all these Religious Persons and Zealots which compose the Church, with all other Christians, should be destroy'd after such a manner, that two should not abide together : So that all shall be destroyed and displac'd. These things must needs come to pass, because all study to be Priests and Religious, and no Body to be a true Christian. Jesus Christ cannot reign in all these things. He must needs demolish them, and cast down the mighty from their Seats, and abolish the Wisdom of the Wise ; and then he shall reign. Would you, Sir, Pray, and do Penance, that Jesus Christ may not reign ? If his Kingdom be inseparable (e) from his Gospel-Spirit, it must be establish'd that he may reign there ; and it cannot be establish'd if Riches, Power and Honours be not banish'd out of the Church. For tho indeed he should come bodily into the

(d) *Matth. 24. 2.* (e) *Rom. 14. 17.*

World, as he did in the time of the Jews, he would not be received by the Church: She would rather Murther him a thousand times, than either hear or follow him; for she will Rule and not Submit, and will persevere in the Glory and Wealth of the World, and contempt of the humility and poverty of Spirit, wherein Jesus Christ has placed her. Therefore of necessity all these Riches, Grandeurs and Honours, must be destroyed before Jesus Christ can reign in his Church. He has no need of that great number of Priests, nor of the multitude of Monks. But he cherishes (f) Souls humbled and despised for his Word. All that splendor and that order which appears beautiful in Men's Eyes, is defective before the Lord, who has chosen Contempt and Reproach for our Example.

I said to her: Seeing the wrath of God was so great that it will not be appeased, we must resolve to suffer; but it was very hard to see the total ruin of the Church, in which among others there might be yet a great many good men who would suffer innocently.

She said: Sir, you do not know God yet, since you imagine that he is angry and will not be appeased, and that he does hard things in his universal Chastisements; yea, that he seems cruel in making the Innocent to suffer with the Guilty. Believe me, Sir, all these Sentiments are Blasphemies which you utter against God, without knowing it, for want of not considering sufficiently that God is a Being All-just, All-good, and All-powerful. If he be All-just, he can never commit Injustice; if he be All-good, he can never do an evil thing; if he be All-powerful, nothing can be wanting to him, nor fail him. How say you that his Wrath cannot be appeased, since an infinite Goodness cannot have Wrath? (g) And if he could not be appeased, he were not Merciful. If he (h) did a hard thing, this would likewise offend his Goodness. And if he should make the Innocent suffer with the Guilty, he would act against his Justice. All which things can never be done by God. But our narrow mind not comprehending that Almighty Power, Goodness and Righteousness, judgeth rashly of God: We imagine that he is in anger when he does not pardon any more: And if we would fix our minds to consider the reasons why he does not Pardon, we would easily perceive

(f) *If* 66. 1, 2, 5. (g) *If* 27. 4. (h) *Wisd.* 12. 14. that

that he (i) cannot in justice pardon any longer, because our sins are very numerous and without repentance: We love them, and we will not part with them. Must he then not chastise them if he love Righteousness? and instead of perceiving that they constrain God to this chastisement, we see nothing but that God is greatly in wrath! as if he were subject to vicious Passions like to ours. We judge likewise that he will not be appeased when he chastiseth, notwithstanding our Prayers; but we do not see that these Prayers are not effectual, because they are not accompanied with (m) regret and resolution of amendment. We pray that God may pardon us, and not chastise us, (n) that we may the more peaceably continue in our Sins which peace and prosperity do nourish. Would God be merciful if he should pardon us, or be appeased in such a case? He would rather be unmerciful in being appeased, and in giving us time and means to sin the more. Who does not see that our judgments are deceived, and that we would by them blame God for our own faults? as when we say, that it is a hard thing to have universal Chastisements, when we believe there are yet many good Men among others who are wicked, and do not perceive that the evil is universal when the punishments are so. The sacred History of the Scripture makes appear to us, (o) that God would have pardoned all that were in *Sodom*, if there had been but ten Righteous within it. We believe there are a great many good men according to our judgment, whereas it may be before God there are none; and even tho there were divers, yet it is a good thing (p) that the Righteous be tried by Tribulation, for they testify by it the fidelity they have toward God, in continuing constantly faithful to him in adversity, as well as in prosperity; and likewise they thereby try themselves: For many are deceived who (q) thought they were faithful to God in Prosperity, and yet Adversities have made them stumble in the midst of their Race, or they have perish'd at the first essay of Temptation. So that God manifests always great Righteousness and great Mercy, chiefly in sending universal

(i) *Fer.* 15. 1, 5, 6. (k) *Fer.* 17. 1. (l) *Deut.* 1. 42, 43. 45. *Prov.* 1. 24. 31. *Zach.* 7. 13. (m) *Is.* 1. 15. (n) *Jam.* 4. 3. (o) *Gen.* 18. 32. (p) *1 Per.* 1. 6, 7. (q) *Mat.* 13. 20, 21.

Rods, in chastning the Wicked, and in trying the Righteous, if there be any, who never suffer for the Guilty, but for their own Perfection and Merit. Universal Chastisements being much more profitable to the Good than to the Evil, because they purifie them and render them more perfect, whereas the wicked become worse by them.

I was obliged to confess, That I had done a great wrong in speaking thus of God, according to my Sentiment. I asked her how I ought to behave my self, that I may not any more fall into the like faults, and that I might make a right judgment of God.

She said : Sir, never judge according to what you see outwardly, but give always time to your Spirit to examin the works of God, and you will discover that all that he does and permits is accompanied with (r) Righteousness, Goodness and Power, which are his Qualities, without which he does nothing. Men do deceive themselves, and the most wise err in this point, when they will censure the works of God. In which they are real Ignorants ; for if they had any small Light, they would admire and adore them only, without making any judgments of them ; for of necessity what they make is unjust, injurious, or rash, because no human Spirits are capable of (s) fathoming the works of God, for they are all incomprehensible. We can only see that in them (t) there is all sort of Goodness, Righteousness and Power. If we consider only a grain of Corn, we shall find in it these three things, Power is in its frame, because no man is able to make a grain of Corn how Great and Learned soever he be. We percieve also in this grain the goodness of God, who gives so liberally to the Good and to the Wicked their necessary Food. We will there likewise find Righteousness, because having made Man subject to be nourished with this grain, he provides it for him, even tho he be his Enemy, that he may find no injustice in God, to have subjected him to a thing which afterwards should be denied him. He wills that we may comprehend aright that all his works are Just, and Good, and Powerful, tho we be ignorant how he makes them.

(r) Ps. 45. 5. Ps. 89. 14, 15. Jer. 32. 17, 18. (s) Ps. 147. 5. R.m. 11. 33.—36. (t) Ps. 111. 7, 8.

The Twenty fourth Conference.

*Of the Enquiry about the most Holy Trinity, and concerning Grace; and that the Saints themselves are mistaken therein, none being Infal-
lible.*

I Said to her : That I had committed a great many faults in this matter ; that often I would needs dive into the works of God, even his highest Mysteries, such as that of Grace and the Trinity ; and that many holy Doctors had pass'd all their Life in such Studies, to declare how God begets his Word, or how God bestows Grace differently.

She replied, Sir, It is very ill done for a silly Worm of the Earth to seek to comprehend that which a God does. It is enough (u) always for a Servant to know what is agreeable to his Master in the matter of the duty of his Service, without its being permitted him to enquire into his most secret particular Affairs. He has performed his Duty when he has done that which is commanded and ordain'd him by his Master. Much more blame worthy is it that a Creature should inform it self how God begets his Word, or how he distributes his Graces unto Men : This is beyond our Duty. We ought to reckon our selves very happy to learn that God has so much Goodness ; (x) that he always imparts to us Grace sufficient to enable us to love and serve him. Every one may find this in his own Conscience ; and Experience, which is the Mistress of all Scienc, can testify that every one has received Grace from God, even tho he be a great Sinner. What need is there after this to inform our selves how God gives these Graces ? Or if he give more to one than to another ? If this be not to seek matter to condemn God of Partiality, or to make him have respect of Persons, and so to render him less Lovely.

There is yet less ground to inform our selves what the Holy Trinity is, for no body is capable of comprehending it, nor yet how the Father (y) begets the Son; so much the rather, that to render unto God agreeable Service, there is no need of knowing any other thing than what he commands and ordains us. (z) What is more is unprofitable or evil; for all that we should be able to say or know of the Trinity, cannot but greatly lessen the glory of his Being, which is above all that is most Beautiful, most Good, and most Great. There is nothing that can be compared to God; neither are there any words that can give us the least signification of the Being of God, who comprehends all things. If God were Man, we would say that his Heart is the Father, His Mouth the Son, and his Understanding the Holy Spirit; because the Heart of Man is the seat of Love; his Mouth is the Channel by which this love is communicated; and his Understanding is the Garden wherein the Conceptions do grow to make his Love be comprehended. These three things are but one Person who it have these three diverse Operations. The Holy Trinity is but one God, who is all Love, (a) he loves Man incomprehensibly. We may call this Love (b) the Father. Now, no Being is perfect if it be not communicated. The Word has communicated unto Man this Love; therefore it may be call'd the Son. (c) And this Word cannot be comprehended without Understanding, which has likewise been given unto Man to comprehend this Love; which understanding may be call'd (d) the Holy Spirit. All three together are but that sole Love, which is God. There is not in the Holy Trinity a Man, a Child, nor a Dove, as they paint it unto us; but these are all Figures to make us conceive something of God, who nevertheless is unconceivable: And all that they can say to us of him are but contempts or reproaches which we commit against God; for he is not to be compar'd to any thing. We must force our selves to love him, nor to comprehend him. The Saints themselves committed great faults while they would needs embark into these Studies. I believe the Devil has

(y) *Prov.* 30. 4. (z) *John* 14. 21. (a) 1 *Joh.* 18. 8. (b) 1 *Joh.* 4. 10, 14. (c) *Joh.* 1 14. (d) 1 *Joh.* 4. 13. 5. 20.

raised Disputes thereupon, to amuse Men in useles things, rather than profitable, and to seek to comprehend what ought to be adored.

I ask'd her, if the holy Doctors could indeed have committed such faults, since we held that they had the Holy Spirit.

She said: Yes, Sir, they committed many others through Ignorance: They err'd in many things: The Holy Spirit did not always guide their Pen, nor their Understandings: They were always frail Men so long as they lived upon Earth. They might always fail and err; for Jesus Christ says, that (e) *He who says he is without Sin, is a Liar.* I believe I have also told you heretofore Sir, that none is Infallible but God. Men who have the Holy Spirit, are not always so disengaged from themselves that the Holy Spirit has that absolute dominion over them. Their own sense of things gives them frequent hindrances; and as long as they act naturally, they stray from the Holy Spirit, and do often commit in these wandrings great faults, as *David* did, (f) tho God says, that *He was a Man according to his own Heart:* And *Solomon*, who (g) had received the Spirit in fulness, did notwithstanding Sin greatly against the Faith it self, and against the Commandments of God. You must not wonder therefore that the Holy Fathers have committed faults in the Church; the Apostles themselves committed them, (h) though they had visibly received the Holy Spirit. We must never build on a Foundation so weak as Men are: They may all err, tho they were Saints, and have erred in many things in upholding the Church: For as soon as they perceived that it failed in the Souls of Christians, and that its Honour and Authority was fallen, they would needs redress it by worldly Honours and Riches, and even defend it by Disputes and by Arms; all which things are Buildings made with Mens hands, which shall be ruined. (i) For that which God has not built, shall be Destroyed. Jesus Christ knew far better the means that were proper to uphold his Church: He saw the time to come as well as the present. He has not ordain'd that it should be maintain'd by Silver, Authority, Arms, or Disputes, but (l) by Holiness.

(e) 1 Job. 1. 10. (f) 1 Sam. 11. 16. 4. 19. 29. 24. (g) 1 Kings, ii. 4. ii. (h) Gal. ii. 2 14. (i) Ps. 127. 1. (l) Job. 17. 17, 19. Eph. 5. 26, 27.

The Twenty fifth Conference.

That the Holy Spirit sends always new Influences; and that we must not bound his Lights, nor the Interpretation of the Scriptures to that which the Holy Fathers have formerly had.

I Could not resist so clear Truths, perceiving well that all Men are Fallible: But because every one had always received the Opinions of the Holy Fathers, as things certain, I said to her, that I had sworn to receive no other Explications of the Holy Scriptures, but those of the Holy Fathers; and that the Church did oblige all Persons plac'd in Dignities, to do the same: So that in all Benefices received, they still take this Oath before they enter in possession of them.

She said: Sir, the Church can oblige no body to resist the Holy Spirit. Your Oath is not obligatory in this case. If God favour you, or some other Person of your Acquaintance with any new Light, must you reject it to obey Men? Jesus Christ did not forbid this. On the contrary he has said, (m) *Receive the Holy Spirit: And (n) When he shall come, he will teach you all things.* He speaks to the Apostles, and to all Christians in them. This Holy Spirit is never idle: He operates always new Graces in those who receive him, and gives still more clear Interpretations of the Holy Scriptures (o); according as the end of the World approaches we shall every day understand them more clearly: We see the figure of this in the Sciences of Natural things: There is at present more knowledge of them than ever, and Men now do know much more of Natural things, which those who are gone before us were ignorant of, yea, understood them in a sense quite contrary to the truth. They taught that the Sun goes round about the Earth: Now they teach that the Earth turns, and that the Sun is fixt; which is more to be believed. And thus

in many Natural things they have discovered many Secrets, since Sciences were encreas'd: The Figure is never so accomplish'd as the thing figured: Wherefore then should the Light of the Holy Spirit, or the understanding of the Holy Scriptures be bounded to what the holy Fathers understood of them? Every one of them had Discoveries according to his Talent, and no more: I believe Sir, that if you examin them narrowly, you will find that they do not accord in all things; yea, even that they sometimes contradict one another, which cannot come from God; for there is never any contradiction in him. Each of the Fathers saw as far as his view reached, and no more. God does always farther discover his Secrets. Can Men cause others to swear, or can they swear themselves, that they shall not receive any other Discoveries, but that which the holy Fathers have received, without opposing the Grace and Light of God? This would be, to speak after our way, to clip the wings of the Holy Spirit, that he might not flie farther than Men had marked out to him. Truly Sir, there are great Errors in all things. It seems Men would take from God Power and Authority to attribute it to themselves, giving him Laws, and forbidding Men to obey him. The holy Fathers could not be so rash as to believe that no body could understand the Holy Scriptures farther than they, for they affirm that there are depths of hidden Treasure, which they cannot comprehend. In effect I believe that nothing has been yet understood (p) in a perfect sense of all the Holy Scripture; even till now; and that likewise there is nothing accomplished but the Death of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless (q) all must be understood and accomplish'd in a perfect Sense, before the end of the World. God has not said or done any thing in vain: He will give to Men the full understanding of all that he has said by his holy Prophets from the beginning of the World; and nothing is so hid but it shall be discovered before the World end. Why then should they forbid to receive other Interpretations than those which the holy Fathers in past times have received? It were better to command to Pray continually (r) for greater Light, that we may know the better the Mysteries of our Faith, that we may the better observe and follow them; for we can never have so much love for a thing unknown, as for that which we know.

(p) 1 Cor. 13. 9, 10. (q) 1 J. 11. 9. (r) Eph. 1. 17. 18.

I said to her, that this Oath was not ordained to oppose directly the Holy Spirit, but rather to hinder every one from Interpreting the Scriptures after his own way, from which many Errors might proceed, if there were not an uniform Belief among all Christians.

*She replied, Truly Sir, you cannot cover these Evils, for they are too manifest. Whether this opposition to the Holy Spirit be made directly or indirectly, it is always evil. They may indeed persuade the People to believe that the Holy Fathers had more light for understanding the Holy Scriptures, than Laick Persons, taken up about the Affairs of the World : But to oblige Priests to take Oaths not to receive any other Interpretations than those of the ancient Fathers, is to make them Swear indirectly that they shall oppose the Holy Spirit ; Seeing they would believe they falsified their Oath in receiving a new Light of the Holy Spirit, which the Fathers had not received. If new Light must come before the end of the World, and the Priests have sworn not to receive it, Laicks receiving it will be yet less approved by that which you call the Church, than the Priests, who have the first Rank there. To whom then shall the Holy Spirit address to spread his Light upon the Earth ? He must of necessity bestow it on the Turks, Jews, or Heathens, since those who are called Christians will not, or cannot receive it, for fear of falsifying their Oath. And if God reveal his Secrets to Babes, (s) as he ordinarily does ; who among the Christians would receive this Revelation ? The particular Priests could not do it because of their Oath ; and if they would present it to what is called the *Body of the Church*, They would examin whether the ancient Fathers have said the same things, which if they did not find, they would reject it as a Herefie, since their resolution is not to receive any thing, but what the ancient Fathers have said. If the Church were that which Jesus Christ brought from Heaven, it would be always uniform, and guided by the same Holy Spirit. There would be no need to fear that every one would Interpret the Holy Scriptures after his own way, for there could not be but one and the same Belief : For all would be Saints, and capable of Interpreting the Scriptures ; yea, (t) even of Prophecying, according as God, who is free, should grant Light to every one ; tho Men would indeed Captivate and limit him by their new Laws.*

(s) *Mat* ii. 25. (t) *Joel* 2 28, 29.

The Twenty sixth Conference.

How and wherefore the Holy Scripture has not been understood in a perfect Sense, as yet in any thing; which is shewn by new Explications, touching the Creation of Man, his Fall, the Coming of Jesus Christ in Disgrace, and his coming in Glory upon Earth, to reign there for ever. Of the Glorification of the Creatures, both Animate and Inanimate; and what makes Paradise and Hell; and that universal Plagues and Rods shall precede all these things.

HAVING remarked that she spake so often of the Holy Scriptures, which she said had not been understood hitherto in their perfect Sense; I asked her how she could speak of them, since she had told me that for a long time past she had not read them, nor made use of any Books; and from whence could she know that they were not understood in their perfect Sense.

She said, Sir, I will tell you, trusting in your Secrecy, that God hath given me the understanding of all the Holy Scripture, without having read it; and when by chance, or casually I hear Sermons or other Conferences to Explain it, I perceive plainly that they do not speak of it in its perfect Sense. Sometimes they explain something in part, and at other times in a sense altogether contrary, or ill applied, for what they say is repugnant to what I know in my Intercourse; and the Spirit of God cannot have contrary Senses; either the one or the other must be deceived. As for me, I think my Sentiment is immediately given to me from God, because I never studied nor learned any thing from Men; and this likewise cannot come from my Imagination, because I never give way to Speculation, and desire not to know nor learn any thing; for I stop my Ears to all that they would teach me, fearing lest there should

remain in my Understanding any Idea's of the Things which I had read or heard, which would mingle themselves with the Light which God gives me. I would be very presumptuous to believe that these so clear Interpretations come from my self,

I said to her, That I remember she had divers times cited some Passages of Scripture, and even referr'd to the Chapter of the Text, as speaking of the last Times, in the 24th Chapter of S. Matthew, entreating me to read it: asking her, How she could know this?

She said to me: Sir, I have read sometimes transiently the New Testament, having obtain'd Permission of a certain Bishop: But as soon as I began to read I perceiv'd in what I read, all my Sentiments explain'd, so that if I were to write the Sentiments which I carry within me, I should compose a Book like that of the New Testament: so much do I find them altogether conformable. And it seeming to me that it would be useless to read what I did so sensibly possess, I left off to read, except where there was occasion to speak of the Gospel, or any other thing contain'd in the said Testament, I was then well pleas'd to cite it, that by this mean, my Saying might be more authoriz'd by the Holy Scripture, than by my simple Word: tho' it be altogether conformable thereunto. And that 24th Chapter of S. Matthew, is so much the more in my Heart that I see it treats of the Time in which we are fallen at present. I wish all the World would read it, that they might apprehend the more the Danger in which we live, without perceiving it.

I said to her; I had read that Chapter divers Times, and, nevertheless did not comprehend that it spoke of this present Time: entreating she would explain it to me.

*She said: Sir, I will do it, by the Grace of God: But I must have Time to rest: Let us still go on our Way; and how soon I shall stop, I will give you that Explication in Writing. * Give me only the Text, and I believe you will receive great Light from it. You may also confront it with the Explications which the Holy Fathers have made of it. You will see which of all will have the most perfect Sense. That will be a small Sample; which will*

* See this Explication in the last Letter of the First Part, of *La Lumiere nee en Tenebres.*

shew what the whole Piece will be. For it seems to me, that I will be oblig'd one Day to explain all the Holy Scripture in general; but for this end I will need to keep myself without the Reach of the *Roman Church*, because by speaking the Truth of it, I will be liable to their Reproof. Truth does alway shock Lying, as Righteousness does Unrighteousness: I know I cannot but speak the Truth, and also that they who do not follow it, do resist it. For this cause they kill'd the Holy Prophets and Jesus Christ himself, because they bear Witness to the Truth. I can expect no less Recompence from Christians now; for they being without the Truth will strongly resist it; and practising Unrighteousness, they will not suffer Righteousness in their presence; because it would reprove them: I can very well hold my Peace, as I have done for so many Years by-gone: But when God shall will that I speak, I will cry to all the World, *(t)* *without fearing those who can but kill the Body.* Death would be agreeable to me, if with it I could enlighten my Christian Brethren, and draw them out of Error.

I said to her: That the Church did not put to death the Holy Fathers, who had explain'd the Holy Scriptures: But, on the contrary, had honour'd and esteem'd them: That neither ought she to be afraid of being ill treated by them: but rather receiv'd and approved in explaining the Scriptures.

She said to me: Sir, You would always excuse this Church, because you have espous'd her, as I have also done. It proceeds from this, that you do not yet distinguish what the true Church is, tho' I have so often spoke to you of it. The Church, in a perfect and defin'd Sense, is no other thing but the Souls (u) which are united in Heart and Will wholly unto God. These are his only Spouses. He never had any others, no more under the Old Testament than the New, yea from the Beginning of the World, and will never have, even to the End, yea throughout all Eternity. Nothing can be the Church, but that which is united wholly unto God: No more than a Woman can be a Man's Spouse, if she be not united to him. For if she joyn herself to another she is an Adulteress; the same is it, without Comparison, in the Alliance which God makes with Souls.

(t) *Matth. 10. 27, 28.* *(u)* *Job. 17. 19 —, 26.*

If (x) they withdraw from him, and joyn themselves to any other thing, they are Adulteresses, and worthy of being divorc'd. If God permit a Man to forsake his Wife for Whoredom, wherefore should not this Law be observ'd by himself? If *Rome*, with its College, does remain united to God in the Spirit of Truth, she is the Church, and his Spouse: But if she be separated from that Truth and Righteousness, she is no more but a Civil and Political Assembly. Make always this Distinction, Sir, or otherwise you will be deceiv'd, taking Falshood for Truth. If there were a thousand Popes, with as many Counsellors, assembled, and if they did not possess the Spirit of God, they are not the Church; but if a simple Woman, that spins on a Distaff, do possess the Spirit of God, she is the Church. The Holy Fathers were not ill treated by *Rome*, in expounding the Holy Scriptures, because there were yet perhaps in their Time, in those Assemblies, some Souls, which were Churches, and who, by consequence, did defend the Truth: But at present this Support is not to be expected, but rather mortal Persecutions. An evil thing, Sir, ought not to be maintain'd blindly, as if it were good: Therefore God has given you a good Judgment to make this Distinction; for if you continue always fix'd in the Resolution, to take this outward Body of the *Roman* Church for the Holy Church, it is in vain for me to discover to you her Evil and the Infidelity she has committed toward her lawful Husband. You would do as he who would permit his Wife to play the Adulteress, in dissembling it without being desirous to know or discover it. The Sin is as great to tolerate it, as to do it. If God permit me to speak the Truth openly to that Church which you esteem, you would see with Regret how ill she would treat me, you could not deliver me from the Peril, to which your pious Belief would expose me.

I said to her: That for the Exposition of the Holy Scriptures she needed offend no Body: That this was but what God had declar'd unto us: That every one ought to desire to have still a more clear Understanding of them, yea even the Wicked themselves, that this ought not to displease them. I entreated her to write boldly.

She said: When you shall read, Sir, the 24th Chapter, which I have promised you, it may be, you will change your Opinion; for the Word of God (y) is like to a two-edged Sword. Truth cuts all that it meets with, in Opposition to it: So that without respecting any Body, we cut all sorts of Errors and Lies, in following only the straight Truth blindly; and without knowing it we do often wound those of whom we are not thinking. If the Word of God were well explain'd, it would offend all the Persons that live now in the World, yea those who are esteem'd Holy and Perfect. For as we do not see so many little Atoms flying in the Air when the Sun does not shine brightly, as we do when he spreads his Beams clearly; even so the Souls which are full of Sins and Imperfections, (z) do not perceive them so long as the clear Understanding of true Perfection is not given them. They believe that they are very clean; but so soon as this Divine Light shall give its Rays, every one will see evidently that he is deceiv'd, that he has no Righteousness, and that he is no true Christian. Therefore the Devil will hinder, as much as he can, this Light from being discover'd, and will oppose himself thereunto, even by those that have most Authority; that very few may perceive their Blindness: For if these Explications were maturely consider'd by every one, all the World would be converted, for there is nothing more charming than to consider that which God has done for Man from his Creation, and continued even till now, which is nothing but a continued Course of Benefits, all corresponding to one another, always in great Perfection. The Creation, the Law of Moses, the Prophets, the Gospels, are all the same thing, by an excellent Harmony.

I ask'd her; Whether the Ancient Fathers had not discover'd these things aright, and if they had not declar'd this to the World by so many Expositions and Books which they had written?

She said: Sir, It was not necessary that the Ancient Fathers should have the Understanding of all things: It was enough that they understood that which Men had need of then; but since we draw near to the Fulness of time, it is expedient for Men now, that they learn that which must fall out in their Time. Therefore God now reveals

(y) *Heb.* 4. 12. (z) *Rom* 7. 9.

the Secrets which he would then have to be kept hid. When the Apostles ask'd Jesus Christ, when these things, which Jesus Christ had told them, should come to pass? He answer'd them, *That (a) it was not for them to know the Times, which the Father had in his own power*: To shew, that unseasonable Light ought not to be desir'd; and that to him alone appertains the knowing the Time and the Hour of all things. Thus he thought fit to reserve the Understanding of the Scriptures, till the *(b)* necessary time, which is at present. The Holy Fathers could not know then what he would reserve till now; and all that they declar'd of it by so many Expositions and Books, was but what they could know by Divine Light, joyn'd to their own Conceptions, which were not always guided by the Holy Spirit: For their Studies and proper Sentiments often hindred this Knowledge, and serv'd for Clouds to that Divine Sun, who could not dilate his Beams fully upon their Souls, because they were not entirely free and disingag'd from their own Idea's and Preoccupations. It is true, they said many things useful for that Time, but not sufficient enough to enlighten those of the present Time. All now must be known as it is. The Prophets have indeed declar'd all that must come to pass, even to the End of the World; but neither they themselves, nor any others understood their Sayings; Jesus Christ himself declar'd what they had said, by *(d)* Parables, not being willing to give the Understanding of them, but only tell them: That they might adore the Marvels of God, when they should see the Things come to pass, which had been for so long a Time foretold.

I ask'd her; If she had received from God those Discoveries, which have been for so long time hid from all the World.

She said: Yes, Sir, I may say it with Confusion, That it hath pleased God to communicate his Secrets to me, which he has (e) hid from the Wise and Great of the Earth. If such has been his Will, who can reprove it, or find Fault with that which he finds good? Is not he the absolute Lord of all things? That which he wills, he can do, without Men's being able to contradict it:

(a) *Act.* 1. 6, 7. (b) *Fer.* 30. 24. *Dan.* 12. 9. *Rev.* 10. 4. (c) *Dan.* 12. 8. (d) *Matth.* 13. 34, 35. (e) *Matth.* 11. 25.

for no Body is capable of giving Law to him. He is as Powerful as Just and Good. Let us only adore his Designs. Tho' I were even the most wicked Creature of the World, he might serve himself of me in what pleases him, and damn me in the End if I have merited it. All things being subject to him, all things must obey him, the Infernal Powers as well as the Celestial and Terrestrial. Nothing can resist his almighty Arms. I must submit, Sir; if God will declare his Marvels by me, I cannot hinder him. If he will speak by a Stone, or Wood, he ought to be heard with Respect. I have not sought nor ask'd these things; they have been pour'd into me insensibly: When once I desired no more to know any thing, I have learn'd all things, even to the greatest Mysteries of our Faith, and all that shall befall Men, even to the End of the World. Nothing has been conceal'd from me. I know the Masterpieces of the Works of God, and the Accomplishment of the Holy Scriptures: The Re-establishment of the Holy Church, and the Reign of Jesus Christ upon Earth: The Alliance which he promised unto *Abraham*, and all the Things which are foretold by the Holy Prophets. Nothing shall pass without having its accomplish'd Sense, and its present Accomplishment in the Mystical, Literal, Divine and Material Sense. It is an Abyss (f) of Joy to think of it. What Joy to see it (g) brought to pass! If you saw it as I do, Sir, you could no longer love any other thing, no more than all other Men: For no Delights can be imagin'd greater than those which Jesus Christ (h) has promised to Men, to Live, to Converse (i) and to reign among them, Visibly and Bodily upon Earth. This is a thing which ravishes my Soul with Joy and Contentment. You need not be astonish'd that I take no more Pleasure in earthly things, since these heavenly ones do take me up entirely.

I heard all these things with Admiration, not knowing what to answer, but to entreat her that she would explain herself a little more upon this Subject.

She said; Consider, Sir, God created Man to (l) take his Delight with him. For this End he made him after his own Image and Likeness, because there can be nothing more

(f) *Psal.* 92. 5, 6. (g) *Rev.* 19. 7. (h) *Is.* 64. 4. 1 *Cor.* 2. 9. (i) *Rev.* 20. 4. 21. 3. (l) *Prov.* 8. 21.

delightful than to rejoyce (m) with ones like. Therefore he made Man (n) with a Divine and Immortal Soul, like to himself. He made him Good, Righteous and Powerful, in nothing different from himself, but in this, that he must depend upon God, as his Creator, whereas God has a Sovereign Independency, without Origine or Beginning, and Man receiv'd Being at a certain Time, produc'd by the Goodness and Power of God; whom he ought always to acknowledge and obey. But instead of doing this, he slighted this Dependence, desiring to stand by himself, and, as God, to know all things; Which destroyed and ruin'd him; for no sooner did he conceive the Desire of knowing Good and Evil (o), and of equalling himself unto God, eating the Apple which God had forbidden him, for an outward Mark of his Ambition, but he presently perceived the Misery into which he had reduc'd himself, finding himself stript of all the Graces and Prerogatives into which God had so freely plac'd him; and fell into Derision with God, because of his Arrogance. Notwithstanding of this, God does not change, and will never change his Designs (p). He desires to take his Delight with Men: For he created them for no other End. Therefore he will not destroy or annihilate them, as they merited; but makes (q) them only know the Fault which they had committed, in desiring to shake off their Dependence upon him; and he gives them a certain time to do Penitence for this Fault, to the end that this (Penitence) being finish'd, he may receive them again into his Favour, and give them the first Robe of Innocence, with the same Goodness and Power wherein he created them, that throughout all Brer-nity he might accomplish his first Designs, which are to *take his Delight with Men*. This Time of Penitence is this short Life, wherein we breath at present, which is the Exile into which we were banish'd from Paradise, which was the Presence of God, that *Adam* enjoy'd before his Sin, for he then communicated himself to him as a Friend unto his Friend. This makes Paradise, there being no other Place (r) that can make it but this Presence of God; this alone is the Paradise of Delights: For tho' indeed *Adam* had remain'd in the earthly Paradise, in which he was, he

(m) *Cant* 4. 10. (n) *Wisd.* 2. 23. (o) *Gen.* 3. 6. (p) *J.* 46. 10. (q) *Wisd.* 12. 2. (r) *Psal.* 73. 24, 26.

had continued as miserable as on the Earth which we possess at present, after having quit the Conversation of God, through his own Fault, because nothing can be Paradise but this Divine Conversation. And if *Adam* had remain'd in this Earthly Paradise after his Sin, he had been even much more miserable than we are in this strange Land: Because he might have eaten of the *Tree of Life* (s) that he should not die, and consequently have continued always miserable without ever finishing his Penance, which the goodness of God foreseeing, he banish'd him out of it, that his Penance might be only temporal and passing. In this he has shewn us great Mercy: For as soon as we shall have finish'd this short Penance which he has enjoyn'd us (t) we shall return into the same Conversation with God that *Adam* had before his Sin, and even more familiar, since God is become Man-like to us; and then our Souls only were like to him. It is a more perfect and accomplish'd Conversation of Body and Soul than that of the Soul only. But because God will give in the End an accomplishment to all things, in an altogether perfect Sense, he would have taken Human Flesh, that he might converse with us perfectly, even tho' *Adam* had never sinn'd; and tho' there had not been any need of redeeming us by his Death. God is not become Man, to suffer or to die, but to converse with us and reign in us visibly and sensibly upon Earth, (u) which will be made the Paradise of the Delights of God with Men.

I ask'd her; If it was not needful that God should become Man, to redeem us, since we were all lost by Sin?

She said: No, Sir, God is not subject to any thing (x) and has no necessity. He had no need to become Man, to redeem us. He might with a Word have render'd us the first Grace; seeing that with the same Word he had created the whole World. He could have created a thousand *Adams*, and a thousand earthly Paradises with the same Perfection in which he had created the first of nothing, whom he might justly have let perish eternally, instead of becoming Man to redeem them: But he could not take his Delight with Men, perfectly, unless he made himself Man, like to them. If Man had been like to God, and

(s) *Gen.* 3. 22. (t) *Rev.* 21. 7. (u) *Ps.* 95, & 96. & 97. *Rev.* 5. 10. *Rev.* 21. 1. (x) *Acts* 17. 24. (y) *Joh.* 1. 2.

not God like to Man, there would have been some Defect in these Delights, at least on Man's part, who would not have had perfect Delight without seeing his God like unto him; as a Lover takes Pleasure to wear the Colours which his Mistress wears. This testifies reciprocal Affection, when one renders himself as like as may be to that which he loves. This Fountain of all Love could do what he would. It was needful, therefore, that he should become Man, even tho' Man had not fallen into Sin; to the end he might live with him in perfect Resemblance unto all Eternity, in all sort of Delights; which Happiness is suspended unto Man, until that he have accomplish'd his Penitence, to which he is subjected by his Sin: Which being finished, he will enter again into Communion with God, *as if he had never offended him.* He will speak with God, (x) Face to Face, by his Humanity, which will be rendred immortal (a) as well as that of Jesus Christ, that they may delight themselves perfectly together upon Earth, which will then be rendred Paradise, by the lovely Presence of God, who for these Ends became Man; not that he might suffer or die; which he would needs do by accident for the Instruction of Men and their Relief.

I said unto her; That this had never been understood after this manner, and that many Fathers had call'd the fall of Adam happy, which had caus'd the Incarnation of the Son of God, without which Fall God would not have become Man.

She said: Sir, This is very ill understood. The Fault of Adam ought rather to be call'd very unhappy, which has caus'd the Sufferings and the Death of Jesus Christ, who would assuredly have become Man, not suffering, but reigning; not despis'd, but honour'd by every one; not poor and vile, but in Riches and in Glory; not in Reproach, but ador'd by all Men living; He would have become Man, to reign, not to suffer, for if the design'd End of his Incarnation had been Suffering and Death, the Fathers of the Antient Law would not have had Ground to have so much desir'd and aspir'd after that happy Day, that they might see with their Eyes God made Man, who should deliver them from their Captivity. Could they Desire their Deliverance at so dear a Price as the Passion and

(2) 1 Cor. 13. 12. (a) Job 19. 25, 26, 27.

the Death of Jesus Christ? They would have had a pure Self-love in regarding only their own Deliverance, and not the Glory of God, which could not be met with in the Reproaches, Affronts, Pains and Death of Jesus Christ, which are all things repugnant to his Glory, who could not be honour'd by being hang'd between two Malefactors. So many Holy Prophets, who have foretold the Coming of Jesus in the Flesh, did not speak of his Coming to suffer, but of his Coming in Glory. When *David* (b) invites all Creatures to praise the Lord, he does not speak *but of the Time that he must reign upon Earth*: For he says; *Heavens, Waters, Earth, and all Creatures blest the Lord.* Nothing of all this has blest him in his first Coming in the City of *Bethlehem*: For even Men themselves did then reject and pursue him to put him to Death: As King *Herod* search'd for him, *a little after his Nativity.* If the *Angels* did sing then (c) *Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace, to Men of Good Will*: This could not be but by a Prophetick Spirit, in regarding his Glorious Coming, which will glorifie God, and will give universal Peace to all Men of Good Will, who shall then be upon Earth; seeing that at his Birth, as since, Men of Good Will have never been in Peace, but pursued and persecuted; yea, even Jesus Christ himself. And how should God have been glorified by this Birth, seeing that he has been the more blasphemed by Men.

I entreated her to tell me, for what Reason Jesus Christ became a Suffering Man, since he could have redeem'd us without Suffering or becoming Man, before the Time of his glorious Coming.

She said: The (d) LOVE, Sir, which God bears unto Man, made him take Human Flesh before his Coming in Glory, he perceiv'd that Men would stray always more from him, and altogether forget their Duty, so that almost no Body would any longer acknowledge God. Atheism was almost through all the World. Even his own People, which were the Jews, had made his Law void by their Traditions. Every one follow'd (e) the Learned, and were lost through Ignorance. To remedy which, God became Man, that he might come and teach them, and re-

(b) *Psal.* 95, 96, 97. 148, 149, 50. (c) *Luke* 2. 14. (d) *J. b.* 3. 16.

dress their Faults by Deeds more than by Words. For these Ends, therefore, he takes a Human Body, like to us, to the End he might walk first in the Life, which he would point out unto us; and perceiving that Men were undone by the Wealth and Honours of the World, he takes a poor Mother, who was so despis'd and abandon'd, that she was oblig'd to bring him forth in a Stable, with all the Inconvenience that Poverty brings along with it. And to make appear to Men that Prosperities, the Friendships and Careless of Men did serve for Hindrances of Conversation with God, he leaves his Country to go into *Egypt*, out of all Acquaintance, being oblig'd to this by the Pursuits and Persecutions of *Herod*. He (f) labours for gaining his Bread, that Men might willingly labour for accomplishing their Penitence. At length he begins to teach by Word, and to shew to Men wherein they were wanting, that they might attain to Salvation. He explains to them wherein the Law of God consists, and gives them the Evangelical Counsels for observing it aright. He is despis'd and rejected by the Great Men of this World. He is also Reproach'd, Buffeted, held for a Wicked One: To shew that the Praises of Men are not to be fought for, but their Reproaches rather to be endur'd for the Love of God. At last he is put to Death for the Truth, enduring all with Patience: To teach us to suffer patiently, even to Death. And all that he has endur'd has been (g) to give us an Example.

I ask'd her; In case Men had not come to so great Extremity of Evil, whether she believ'd that Jesus Christ would have come so soon to take Human Flesh?

She Replied: No, Sir, he would not have come till the end of the World to judge and condemn Men, in abolishing Evil: He would have come in the glory of all his Majesty, with all his Angels; not in Contempt and Sufferings: He would have come to Reign, not to undergo an infamous Death. If you read attentively the Prophets, Sir, you will find that they speak far more of this coming in Glory, than of that in Reproach: For the coming of Jesus Christ in Glory, is as it were **THE SUM OF THE DESIGNS WHICH GOD HAS OVER MEN:** And the coming in Reproach, is as it were the *Accident*

(e) *Luke* 11. 52. (f) *Maub.* 6. 3. (g) *1 Pet.* 2. 21.

of the said Designs. Therefore there will be much more spoken of through all the Holy Scriptures. Read Sir, attentively all the said Scriptures from the creation of the World, you will find that they all will aim at this Kingdom of Jesus Christ on Earth with Men, for this is the end of their Creation. God can never reign fully in Men until the time of this coming in Glory; because that they living yet in the liberty of doing evil, do not yet give full possession to God to reign in their Souls; for very often, or at least by accident, Sins do rule there: Which we have seen in the greatest Saints of the World. A *David*, a *Solomon*, all the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus Christ, yea, all those who have since been esteemed Saints, have all in general fallen into Trespases, and have strayed from God for some time: By which he could not find in them his perfect reign, as he will do after his glorious Coming: For then all will be (b) Deify'd, Bodies as well as Souls: And there will be an end of all Evil. God will then have his full dominion over all Flesh; which has never been: For the most part of Men in all times have Blasphemed and Despised him, tho' all were created by him to love him and to adore him. They have yielded their honour and love to the Creatures instead of the Creator. Is it not fit, Sir, that these things be one day repaired, and that God be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth, by his Creatures? (i)

I said to her, That assuredly God would after that manner be adored in Heaven; but that I could not comprehend how he could be so here upon Earth.

She said: I perceive, Sir, that you take for Heaven and Paradise, some precise place, or some particular part which serves for a Residence to God: And for my part I cannot believe that there is any thing capable of containing God, for he is greater than all things, and cannot be contain'd by any thing less than himself. The Heaven is but his Creature, which we say is on high, and God has neither high nor low, for he contains all. Heaven and Paradise is always in him, for there can be no other but his Presence; and he who is in his Presence is in Heaven and Paradise. For my part, I know no other. They tell us many imaginary things of God and of Paradise, which

(h) 1 Cor. 15. 28. (i) Mal. 1. 16.

have very little relation to what they are. It seems God is like an earthly King, who is lodged in some Palace of Wood or Stone: These are all Speculations of Men, as earthly, as their Affections: For God cannot have any fixt place for his Residence, seeing he comprehends all things. When I say that God will be upon Earth reigning with Men, the Earth will then be Paradise; for in all Places where he is, there is always Paradise. If God were in Hell, Hell would then be Paradise, there being no other but the presence of God. That makes in all places where it is, Heaven and Paradise. When this presence is in our Soul, our Soul is Heaven. How, can you not comprehend, Sir, that God could be truly adored in Spirit and in Truth, upon Earth, seeing he has so often promised (l) to make an Alliance with Men? Must not this Alliance be made upon Earth? God being a pure Spirit, has no need of any Station; but Man having a Body, has need of some Place to contain him. The Earth was created (m) for this necessity, that it might contain the Bodies of Men. Why then should not God come upon Earth to dwell with them, seeing they cannot go where God is, in that purity of Spirit? Of necessity he must either come upon Earth, or indeed they could not be entirely united together.

I asked her: When Jesus Christ shall come to reign upon Earth, and to Allie himself with Men?

She said: (m) As soon as the Plagues shall have rooted out all the Wicked, or the greatest part of them; then He will appear in the Clouds, and all the World shall see him. You may indeed live till then, Sir, if God please. For my part, I hope to see him and to reign with him Eternally. In this all my hopes and my joy do consist: For this Life is too miserable to take any contentment in it, without the hope of this time to come. I say, it will be very shortly, for I see the Measure full, and Mens sins are come to the height: They cannot be more numerous: And if there were not some small Veil of Human respect, they would Murther, Rob, commit Adultery, and do all sorts of Abomination publickly, as well as they do them before God. But Pride keeps these things yet concealed, that they may not be despised by Men: And as for what passeth only before God, or a few Persons, they

(l) Jer. 32. 40. (m) Isa. 45. 18. (n) Mat. 24. 30.

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make no more reckoning of it. It seems all is lawful, provided it be not discovered. What greater Evil can be expected? (o) *The abomination of Desolation is in the Sanctuary.* Tho Christians be the People of God, they have denied his Faith, and have abandoned it to become Idolaters of one another. Every one has his proper Idol; one worships his own Body, another his own Spirit, another his Learning, another his Riches, another his Honours, another his Children, or other Creatures: In short, none adore God but (p) *with their Lips.* Is it a wonder that the Judgment is near, when we see that all Men have abandoned their God? Is it not time that he likewise abandon them? which he cannot do; but according as Man withdraws himself from God, by the same consequence God is withdrawn from Man; for two things cannot stay together when the one withdraws it self; the one withdrawing, makes a separation as if they both withdrew: So that God is as much remov'd from Man, as Man has remov'd himself from him. And having thus abandoned God, what can we expect but universal Plagues, which our universal Evils have drawn down upon our guilty Heads? *Which Plagues having purg'd our* (q) *Crimes, and burnt the Tares, the good Grain will then be gathered into the Granary of God, which is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.*

I ask'd her: Whether this Kingdom of Jesus Christ shall remain upon Earth for ever.

She saith; yes, Sir, *It will be Eternal,* (r) and never end. If you believe in Life Eternal, which is an Article of our Creed, you believe in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon Earth. I have also told you, that there is no other Paradise but the Presence of God: And whereas Jesus Christ is God, as my word is me, his Body must have some Station, as also all the other Bodies of the blessed God, being a pure Spirit, has no need of any Station, nor yet our Soul, which is also a Spirit. A Spirit is through all, and comprehends what is at a distance, as well as that which is near: As our Thoughts have no need of a way to go to *Jerusalem*: They go thither in the twinkling of an eye, for they do not stay in any place. Even so God has no need of Heaven, nor of Earth to stay in, being a pure

(o) *Mat. 24. 15.* (p) *Is. 29. 13.* (q) *Mat. 3. 12.* (r) *Pf. 72. 17. Dan. 2. 44.*

Spirit; nor yet our Souls, which are in Paradise when they are united unto God: But our Body has need of Heaven and Earth, and of all the other things which God has created for it; because it is material, it must also stay upon material things, suitable unto its nature. Therefore God has created all this World, with all that is in it, that Man may have his full delights as well in his Body as in his Soul: For God makes nothing imperfect; but all his Works shall have their compleat Perfections: And resolving to create Man a kind of Creature Spiritual and Bodily both together, he gives himself to him for to satisfy his Soul, which is a Spirit; he will give him likewise all created things to satisfy his Body: So that the Soul shall take its delights with God, and the Body its delights with Heaven and Earth, and all the other Creatures: For God has created them for those ends, and for no other thing, that Man might have his full perfect contentment of Body and Mind in that Life Eternal, wherein Jesus Christ will reign always in Body and Soul with the Bodies and Souls of the Blessed, who shall be united in Spirit unto God, and in Body unto the Body of Jesus Christ. Behold the alliance which God promised unto *Abraham*, which he did not see (3) but very far off, and we see it now very near. Do you not think, Sir, that this Kingdom of Jesus Christ must be upon Earth, seeing that he has taken a Human Body like unto ours? A spiritual thing cannot support but that which is spiritual: But a material must have a stay agreeable to its Nature, which is also material. Who can or would change that Excellent Order which God has establish'd in all his Works so just and so perfect, which alone are worthy of Admiration as the Author is of Adoration? Can you yet doubt, Sir, that Jesus Christ shall reign upon Earth, seeing it is a just and necessary thing? Would you believe that God should create all this beautiful World only for this miserable Life of Penitence; and that at the end of it he should abolish this great Work of his Hands, or that he should consume by Fire the whole Universe? This would not be a just thing that he had made all these things only for our Miseries. This would be as much as to say, that God had had little Wisdom.

(3) See *Heb.* ii. 13.

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I was raviſh'd out of my ſelf, to hear things ſo unheard of, ſo admirable and ſo charming: And that I might underſtand a little more, I ask'd her, if the Earth and the World would abide for ever?

She ſaid: Yes, Sir, the (t) Earth, and all the reſt that God has created will abide for ever in the State in which he eſtabliſhed them at their Creation; For the whole works of God (u) are all Everlaſting. Therefore he has created all things with Seeds for to ſpring and to engender Eternally. All which Generations muſt be made for the delight of Man, without Pain or Labour. All things would have brought forth their Kind according to their Species in a good and delightful manner. (x) The Sun would have given his light and heat in meaſure, without any Exceſs; the Air without Storms; the Sea without Tempeſts: The Fire could not have burn'd us, nor the Water drown'd us, nor the Earth brought forth Thorns, nor the Beaſts bitten and poiſon'd us; but all ſort of things would have ſerv'd us for Delight and Recreation. So many little Beaſts which are upon the Earth, and in the Air, which ſeems uſeleſs to us, were created to the end that even the leaſt of our Senſes might be Recreated. Even the diverſity of Flies, and many other ſorts of Animals, Herbs, Trees and Flowers; all theſe were created not only for the neceſſities of Men, but alſo for their Delights. Which things had nothing but Goodneſs and Perfection, without Sharpneſs, Prickings, or Bitings. How much more ought Man to be Good and Perfect, ſeeing all theſe other things which were ſubjected to him, had ſo much Goodneſs and Perfection! You might ask me, from whence it comes that all theſe Creatures are become Evil, ſeeing they were created ſo good and perfect? I will answer you, That (y) the ſin of Man has cauſed all theſe Diſorders, and with Juſtice. For all the Creatures of God ought to riſe up againſt Man, and take vengeance of his Ingratitude, according to their power, becauſe he had merited that all that was given him for Joy, ſhould ſerve him for Grief: Seeing he who ought to have ſerv'd for a delight (z) unto his God, turns away from him to offend him; his Juſtice would require that all the Creatures ſhould do the ſame

(t) Eccl. 1. 4. Baruch 3. 32. (u) Pf. 138. 8. Eccl. 16. 31.
(y) Rom. 8. 20. Prov. 8. 31.

toward him, since he had done it toward his God, who had infinitely benefitted him more than any other Creatures, which might well offend Man, and become his Enemy, when he was become the Enemy of God ; who tho he could not render his Creatures Evil, because he is the Source of all Goodness, from whence nothing that is evil can ever proceed ; yet he might well permit, that his Justice should be exercised by those inferior Creatures, when Man had so justly deserved it.

I asked her, If all those Creatures, Animate and Inanimate would have an eternal Being ?

She said : Yes, Sir: nothing will perish of all that God hasmade : But the evil that is in all these Creatures (a) shall be taken away, because it does not come from him ; and all that comes from Men shall Perish. For Example, That the Sun burns us and dazles the eyes which look upon him : This comes from Man, who has distempered that excellent Star by his Sin : That the Air is stormy ; that the Water is troubled ; That the Earth brings forth (b) Thorns and Thistles : This is for no other reason but to take Vengeance of the Disobedience which Man hath committed against God. The Dog bites ; The Wolf devours ; the Serpent Poysons ; and all those other Evils which the Beasts do to Man, this is for no other reason, but to render him the Punishment that he has merited by his Sin. If the Fire burn him ; if the Air infect him ; if the Water suffocate him, this is but for a just Punishment. If the Earth doth not bring forth its Fruits without Labour, this is but for a Penance of Man's Sin. In short, all the Creatures whatsoever, even to a Flea, are obliged to hurt Man, because of the Disobedience that he has committed against their Creator ; and this by Right and Justice. But as soon as his Penitence shall be accomplished, and he shall obtain the absolute pardon of his Sin, all shall be re-established in their first Estate, and shall not fall away any more, for the glorious presence of Jesus Christ will confirm them in Grace, maintaining them in eternal Peace, all the Creatures with men ; and they shall do then what they should have done from the beginning of the Creation, Man's Rebellion against God ceasing. (d) This will then be a con-

(a) *Rom.* 8. 20. (b) *Gen.* 3. 17, 18. (c) *Rev.* 20. 1,—5.
(d) *Is.* 65. 18, — 25.

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tinual and eternal delight for all things; God will do the will of Man, who shall love him; and Man will do the will of God, upon whom he shall depend. All the Creatures will do the will of Man, who shall command them. In short, God, Man, and all the Creatures will have but one and the same will, without any Rebellion. Will not this then be a Paradise of all the universal World? They have sometimes told us extravagant Stories of Paradise; but this was but to make us understand that it should be filled with all sort of Contentments; as they say to Children, that there they shall eat Sugar with Spoons, because Children have their delight in it: But nothing of all that is told us of it can be true, except what God has revealed of it at present, because the time approaches, and will not be long in coming.

I ask'd her: If Men will be confirm'd in Grace, without being able to sin or fall any more, as they have done once in Adam?

She said: Men, Sir, will not remain without Sin, by constraint or necessity, because God would have them in a Free State (e), that the love he bears them might be perfect; but they (f) cannot fall nor sin any longer, for they will be eternally united unto Jesus Christ, beholding God in Spirit, and that glorious Body in Flesh, who will Govern them, and take his continual Delight with them; which will hinder them from thinking of sinning, or falling. It is true, Adam did converse sometimes with God, but in a manner that was not Humane; and had also Intervals: For if he had always continued in Conversation with God, he could not have Fallen: But in diverting himself from him to hearken to his Wife and the Serpent, he falls into Disobedience, through the wandring of his Spirit. Now, in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, there can be no Straying, he will be always (g) present with them; he will replenish them with Graces and Joys so abundant, that nothing can any more divert them: No body will say any longer, (h) *Know the Lord*: For all shall Know him and Love him. The fault of Adam, and the hard Penitence which it occasion'd, will make them see abundantly what it is to forsake God. Likewise they shall not be any

(e) Ps. 110. 3. (f) Is. 4. 2, 3. and 33. 24. (g) Rev. 22. 3, 4. (h) Jer. 31. 34.

longer subject to Concupiscence; for they shall all be satisfied in Body and Spirit, by the glorious Spiritual and Bodily Presence of Jesus Christ, who having removed all their Sins, will replenish them with the Holy Spirit in Fulness; so that they cannot have any more inclinations to any Evil; so much the more, that it shall be removed from the whole Earth; and that all that is evil shall perish.

I said to her: That all the Interpreters who speak of Judgment, say, That the last Fire must consume all the World.

She said: Sir, These Interpreters could see no farther than their Sight reach'd; but hold for certain all that I tell you. These are Divine Truths. (i) The World will not be utterly Destroyed, but all Evil shall be Consumed. (l) One part of wicked Men will die by the Sword; another part by the Pestilence and Famine, and all those Beauties and Riches which have served as Fewel to sin, will be all burnt and consum'd by Fire, which will purge the whole Earth by its heat: And as heretofore the World was once purged by the waters of an universal Deluge, even so shall it be then by Fire. The World did not perish by the Waters; but indeed all wicked Men, with all their Wickedness and the Subjects of it. The same altogether will come to pass by Fire, which will burn and purge all Iniquity, without sparing any thing: But nothing will perish of the Works of God. The whole Globe of the Earth will remain. The Heavens and the Elements will be shaken, but will not perish, no more than the Servants of God; for whom he will reserve (m) some little corner of the Earth, to save them from Shipwreck, as he saved Noah in the Ark. How greatly desirable is it to be of that Little Number!

I asked her, If these things would fall out at the day of Judgment, or rather at the coming of Jesus Christ in his Glory?

She said: Sir, We speak of Judgment, as if it would be done in one day, or as suddenly as an Enchantment. This will not be done as we think. The Judgment (n) is already made, I believe I have told you heretofore. The

(i) Ps. 102. 26, 27. (l) Zach. 13. 8, 9. (m) Jf. 26. 20, 21. Jf. 56. 4, 5. Rev. 12. 14. (n) Job. 12. 31.

irrevocable Sentence is given; there needs no more but to put it in execution. The Unrighteousness of Men has so opposed the Righteousness of God, that it cannot be any longer without Chastisements, or otherwise he would not be just. The Sword of Justice must needs cut off all that it meets in opposition to it: And at this time all oppose this Righteousness. Therefore all must be cut off. This is the Sentence which shall not be revoked, because Men will not revoke (o) their Unrighteousness. This Sentence will be put in execution; not in one day, as People imagin, but by little and little, to give time and leisure to Men to be Converted, if they will seriously think on it. (p) Wars are the beginnings (q) of Sorrows: After that will follow the Pestilence and Famine; Earthquakes in several places: Yea, even Fire it self (r) as the fore-runner and giver of Advertisement. All this will prove worse until the consummation of all Evil: As the waters of the Deluge always continued, yea, encreased untill they had carried away all the People who then lived upon the Earth; so shall it be of the last Plagues, which are already begun, and will continue; yea, and will encrease even to the end of the wicked World.

I begg'd She would yet tell me one thing upon this Head; Whether Jesus Christ would come upon Earth before these Plagues, or in the time of them, or after them?

She replied: He will not come before these Plagues, Sir, since they are already begun; nor in the time of them, for that will be the remnant of the Reign of Anti-christ, whom Jesus Christ will overthrow by the breath of his Mouth: (s) His coming will be the end of that incarnate Devil, who (t) will be confin'd for all Eternity into Hell, as he shall deserve; but the Plagues will go before (u) the coming of Jesus Christ, by which the Servants of God shall be tried (x) as Gold in the Furnace. They must drink the Cup of Penitence, before they enter into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. *This is what he enquired of the two Sons of Zebedee, (y) if they were able to drink this Cup; that is, to suffer Tribulations, that they might enter into his Kingdom: For they will be so great, (z) that the like hath ne-*

(o) Rev. 9. 20. (p) Wisd. 12. 9. 2 Pet. 9. 4. (q) Luke 21.
(r) Ps. 50. 3. (s) 1 J. ii. 4. 2 Thess. 2. 8. (t) Rev. 19. 20.
(u) Mat. 24. 6, 7. (x) 1 Pet. 4. 17. 18. 19. 22 (y) Mat. 2.
20. (z) Mat. 24. 21.

ver been since the Creation of the World. The Plagues are as the Forerunner of Jesus Christ, who Preached Penitence, and said in *Figuring these last Times* (a) *I Baptize with Water; but there cometh one after me who shall Baptize with the Spirit.* The Water represents Penitence, which must prepare us to receive the Holy Spirit, which Jesus Christ will bring upon the Earth, to Baptize in Spirit all those who shall be washed with the water of Penitence. Jesus Christ therefore will come upon Earth in Glory toward the end of the Plagues, and at the end of the reign of Anti-christ; and he will judge the Quick and the Dead, that is, the Good and the Bad, who shall then remain upon the Earth, and (b) *will draw the Wicked apart, saying unto them, Go, ye Cursed, depart from me into everlasting Fire.* And to the Good he will say, *Come, blessed of my Father, Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World.* In sending the Wicked away from him, he sends them into Hell: For Hell is the privation of the Presence of God, as Paradise is the enjoyment of that Presence. So that to give Paradise unto the Good, he does not send them into Heaven, or some particular place, but only says, *Come unto me, and you shall Inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.* By which he shews, that this Kingdom is his Presence.

I entreated her to tell me, how Souls shall Perish, since she had said heretofore, that never any of the Works of God shall perish. Now, Souls are the Works that he has made, those of the Wicked as well as those of the Good; for Body and Soul are his Workmanship.

She said: Sir, The Souls of the Wicked shall not perish, but shall only be deprived of all sort of Good, and shall live for ever in all sort of Evil. It would be a far less evil unto them to Perish and be Annihilated; because thereby their evils would be at an end: But because they are the works of God, they will never end, but will have a miserable Eternity. Being banished from the presence of God, they will (c) be sent into the Abyss of endless Miseries, as the Good will be preserved in the Abyss of endless Happiness, by the presence of God, which comprehends all Good: Therefore it cannot be found any where else;

(a) *Math* 14 *L. 42* 13. 24. (b) *Mat.* 25. 32, — 41. (c) 25.

for All is in God. And according as they are estrang'd from Happinefs; they are plung'd into Evil, being no other thing but the privation of Good. Once contrary from it, is always contrary from it. In like manner Hell is not Sir, what People imagin it to be; there needs no material Fire to burn the Devils, nor the Souls of the Wicked; for they are but Spirits, upon which Matter has no power, as being a far less thing. The Hell of Devils and damned Souls, is no other thing but a separation from God, who is all Good; and in the privation of him, consists All Evil: For nothing can be Good but the privation of all Evil, and nothing can be Evil but the privation of all Good; which the Devils and damned Souls do possess, when once they have abandoned God, who alone contains all Good. Wicked Souls who live yet upon Earth, have not altogether abandoned God; for they have yet some hope in him, notwithstanding their Wickedness, and therefore they are not as yet fallen into all sort of Evils; for they have not forsaken all Good: But (d) these Souls which have past the time of their Saving Penitence, are Desperate, for they cannot any more approach to any Good, which consists all in God alone, whom they have forsaken of their own will, and consequently are abandoned to all sorts of Evil.

I said unto her, That I had read some Authors of good Note, who affirm, that there is material Fire in the Hell of Devils and damned Souls.

She said: Sir, These Authors may indeed have had some Light, that there will be material Fire in Hell, (e) as well as things hurtful to Man, even Naturally: But they have confounded one Time with another, not knowing to discern the works of God, neither in regard of the joy of Blessed Souls, nor of the pains of the Miserable; and therefore they have committed great faults in desiring to know things before the time that God would reveal them. There will therefore be truly, Sir, material Fire in the Hell of the Devils and the Damned, and likewise Darknes, Poyson, Thunders and Lightnings; bitings of Beasts, tempests of Water; storms of Wind; gnawings of Worms, prickings of Flies and Thorns; and all things that are hurtful will be materially in Hell: Even so blindness of Eyes,

(d) 4 Esdr. 9. 9. — 12. (e) If. 13, 21, 22, Rev. 19. 2.
deafness

deafness of Ears, Leprosie of Body, with all other sorts of Maladies and natural Infirmities. But this will be only after the Judgment, when God shall take away (f) all Malignity from the Earth, and from all the other Elements; when he shall take away the Venom from Serpents, Scorpions, and other venomous Beasts; and even Maladies (g) and infirmities from the Bodies of Men and Beasts; yea, weakneses and imbecilities from Spirits. (h) All this shall be reduc'd unto some corner of the Earth, all in a Mass, that these Malignities may act together upon the Bodies of the Damned; and that the works of their hands may (i) be rendred unto them; For God has never made any of all these evils; He created all things Good. Men only by their Wickedness have given Malignity unto all Created things, and therefore it ought to appertain to them, and to be rendred them by right of Justice; which will come to pass at the Judgment, when the Bodies of the Wicked shall rise also, that none of the works of God may Perish, and shall be sent into that miserable Corner with all the Evils, which shall be removed from the Blessed, and from the whole Earth; from Plants, Beasts and all the Elements, that all these things may serve them only for Delight and Pleasure, without being able to do any more evil, as they were in the beginning of their Creation; and all the Malignities which they have contracted by the Sins of Men, shall be rendred unto their Authors. The Fire of Hell will not be like that which we see, because it is now a mixture of the works of God, with the malignity of the works of Men, as all other things are. God has given unto Fire a sweet and agreeable Light and Heat; and Sin has given it blackness and to burn. These two evils shall be removed and confin'd to Hell, that it may burn and blacken the Bodies of Men, who have thus spoil'd the works of God by their Rebellion. There will not be in Hell Elements, or Beasts, or other things as God has made them, but only the malignity which every one of all these Creatures has contracted by sins. For Example, the Venom will be removed from Serpents and other creeping things, and will be reserved for Hell: As also the fury from Lions and Bulls, that they may converse with the Blessed with Meekness and Gentleness; and that nothing

(f) *If.* ii. 4.—9. (g) *If.* 33. 24. (h) 35. 3. 4. 40. 31.
Rev. 21. 4. (i) *If.* 3. ii. (l) *If.* 65. 25. *If.* 11. *Pf.* 148. 7. 14.
 may

may be able any longer to give them pain; that Fire may give heat and light without burning; that the Air may surround them without being troubled; that the Water may refresh and recreate them without being moved; that the Lyons, Serpents and all other wild Beasts may sport with Men for their Delight and Recreation, and that all things may remain on the Earth to render the Body of Man happy, that with his Soul, it may have a perfect eternal contentment; seeing that the Body has born with the Soul the saving Penitence which God had ordain'd it: Whereas, on the contrary, the Bodies of the Wicked have rebelled against this Penitence, and desiring to take their Delights instead of Sufferings: To which the miserable Soul acquiescing, they have justly merited to suffer joyntly in Hell, which will likewise be Material and upon Earth, that it may act upon Bodies as well as Souls; which was not necessary before the Judgment, since that Devils and Damned Souls had no need of a material Place for their being Tormented; for all the evil of Souls consists in the privation of the Presence of God.

The Twenty seventh Conference:

That a care to withdraw from the Plagues is even a self Love; and that the Conversation of our Souls with God suffices us in all Places.

I said to her, That I saw evidently we drew near to the end of the World, because God gave these Discoveries of many things, which never any body had understood: That her Light was not Human: And I entreated her for the love of God, to tell me where that little corner of the Earth might be which God would reserve for his Servants, that I might save my self during the Plagues.

She said to me: Sir, be not curious to know where this material Place will be, which God will reserve for his Friends. I my self durst not ask him, fearing to seek my self or my own repose. We are yet in the time of Penitence. If we would withdraw that we may not suffer,

this

this would be but self-Love. We shall be every where in security, when our Soul shall be united with God; and even tho our Body should feel the Plagues, our Soul shall be comforted in the midst of Sorrows; as *S. Lawrence* was in the midst of burning Coals, and so many other holy Martyrs. Let us rather think of conversing always with God, than of putting our Body in a place of Security, because it will be always secure in conversing with God. If there be a danger which he would not have us suffer, he will warn us of it always in time, as he did *Noah*, *Lot* and so many others of Friends. He will not permit any thing to befall us, but that (n) in which he would try or purge us. Do not so much desire to know the place where you may retire, as to know the place where God resides, to converse with him: For in this alone consists all our safety, both Bodily and Spiritual. You might indeed withdraw bodily into some place of Security, where your Souls notwithstanding would not be sure of being Saved. And if this were, it would be but a poor Safety; for our Life is so miserable, that to lose it is more desirable than to preserve it, were it not the fear of not having yet accomplish'd the Penitence due for our Sins: Otherwise Death is pleasant, and this Life grievous, were it not that it may have God to converse with. Without this, there is nothing but Miseries.

I asked her, In what place I might find this continual Conversation with God, that I might be every where in Security, and not fear Death?

She said: Sir, You must not go out of your self; for God is the Centre of your Soul. You must not seek him among the publick Places of the City, as (o) the Spouse in the *Canticles* did, who was beaten by the Soldiers: But re-enter into your self, and you will find him. He is no where more particularly than in (p) the Souls of Men. These are his real (q) living Temples, where (r) he rests at Noon, that is in his most clear Light. There entertain your Spirit with him, and he will entertain himself with you. He is more desirous to hear us than we are to speak to him; (s) neither going out nor in, nor any other affairs whatsoever, can hinder this inward Conversation: On the

(n) 1 Cor. 10. 13. (o) Cant. 3. 2, 3. (p) Eph. 3. 17. (q) 2 Cor. 6. 16. (r) Cant. 1. 7. (s) Cant. 2. 14.

contrary, it perfects all things. So soon as our Affections are taken off, from all other Objects, and set upon God alone, we will find him every where, and he will never cease to give us his Graces, to accomplish perfectly all our Enterprizes, how little so ever they be; for his Spirit was the true Wisdom, which is not ignorant of any thing; no more of Temporal things than of Spiritual. This Spirit perfects all sort of things. There is no place or condition be what it will, that can divert us from this Conversation, when our Affections are carried toward it. Make a little Experience of it, Sir, and you will find what I say to be true: You could not any longer fear Death, in possessing the Author of Life: for whether we live or die, we will be always in the Earthly Paradise; in which nevertheless we may indeed sin, as Adam did, because there are yet in this miserable Life so many things which may divert us from God, that without great violence we cannot remain in this Spiritual Conversation: but if Nature must do so great violence to it self at Death to separate from the Soul, why may it not do a less to separate it self from that which *hinders our union with God*? It is in this that Jesus Christ says, (t) *if your Eye, your Foot, or any other Members of your Body do offend you, cut them off, pluck them out, and cast them from you*; To shew that we must force our selves to part with all that may hinder this our Conversation with God, even tho it were our own Eye, which we ought to pluck out if it hinder us.

(t) Mat. 5. 29, 30.

The

The Twenty eighth Conference.

How we ought to Pray, and to understand the Lord's Prayer in its perfect Sense? which regards the Dispositions and Graces that shall be bestowed on us in the Glorious Kingdom of Jesus Christ, of which there are here Marvellous things spoken.

I asked her, How I ought to Pray, to the end I might attain to this continual Communion?

*She said to me: Sir, This Conversation is true Prayer, which consists in the (u) elevation of ones Spirit unto God: And as long as we converse with God, we are still in Prayer, whether we adore him for his Almighty Power, or bless him for his Favours, or beg of him his Light, and that which is necessary for us. This is to Pray always as long as our Spirit is elevated unto God. I know no other method of Praying. If you ask of me words for Praying, I will tell you what Jesus Christ told his Disciples when they intreated him that he would teach them to Pray (x) as St. John did his Disciples? Say, *Our Father, which art in Heaven; hallowed be thy Name;* and the rest of the Lord's Prayer; in which is comprehended all that we can ever ask of God, for his Honour and our Salvation. In these words are comprehended all the Adorations which we owe to God; all the Thanksgivings which we can render him; and all that we may, or ought to ask of him, for our selves, and for all others. This is the Prayer which Jesus Christ himself did compose, and the only one which he taught his Disciples, of which we ought to make more reckoning than of all the Prayers in the World. Many Persons give themselves to divers Vocal Prayers, composed by some Saints; or to a number of*

(u) Job. 4. 23. (x) Luke ii. 1. 4. Mat. 6. 9.

Beads, saying, a great many *Paters* and *Aves* without reflection; so that if we should enquire of these Petitioners, what they ask'd of God by so long Prayers, it may be it would be hard for them to tell, because all passes in many words, without much attention. Others who seem more Pious, and advanced in Virtue, give themselves to some mental Prayers, and pass many hours in silence on a design to pray to God: But at the upshot of all, these does not proceed any fruits from all these Prayers, for we see them as imperfect at the end of twenty Years of their Prayers, as the first day that they began them. Yea, very often they break their Head, and crack their Brains by the force of multiplied Conceptions; one Petition only of the Lord's Prayer well understood, is of more worth than all these.

I said to her; That I did not well understand the Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, entreating her, that she would explain them to me.

She said to me: Sir, you ask a thing which a long time ago I judged necessary for all People: For I think no body does yet well understand that Prayer. But we will need a little time to rest to declare it to you in particular. Let us sit down here, and I will tell it you. First when we say, *Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name*: We acknowledge, *That God is our Father*, that it is he who has Created and Formed us. *Who art in the Heavens*: That is, higher than all things. We use the word *Heaven* because we know nothing by our Humane Understanding, which is higher than the Heavens; and when we would say that God is above all things, we say, he is in the Heavens; to make our Sentiments in a certain manner to be understood. And when we say, *His Name be Hallowed*, this is to wish that all Creatures may adore and bless him, which has never yet come to pass on Earth; where Men themselves do Blaspheme his Holy Name on all occasions, by Word and Deed. God could not have formed this Petition for us, if he were not one day to grant it to us: For he (y) could not make us ask a thing which he would not give: And whereas all his Works will be perfect, it cannot suffice that some particular Souls do hallow his Name (z): It must be in a

(y) *Job.* 16. 23, 24. (z) *Pf.* 148. 550.

perfect sense, that all Men in general, with all other Creatures do hallow him, which will not be untill Jesus Christ Reign in his Glory upon Earth. Then (a) all things will hallow the Name of God, but never before.

And when we say : *Thy Kingdom come* : This is no other thing but to Pray, that we may arrive at that blessed Kingdom, wherein Jesus Christ shall reign over all the Souls and Bodies of the Blessed, and over all Creatures : For we have never had this Happiness that God should Reign entirely, even in our own Souls : Having always given hindrances thereunto by our corrupt Nature, yea, even in the Souls of the Apostles and other Saints (b), God has never compleatly reigned, having always there met with some hindrances or rebellions of their own Will against his. He can never reign perfectly in us, untill he have rooted out all our Evils and Miseries that we may Reign with him. Which we have never as yet done, tho' we have desired to be wholly unto God, we have never reigned over all our Passions and Affections, so as that we might reign fully with God : But we hope that after the Judgment, this Kingdom of God will come unto us. This is the hope of our Prayers, *Thy Kingdom come*.

And when we say, *Thy will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven*, We beg also the same Kingdom : For in our present state we cannot obtain that the Will of God, be fulfilled in us and in others as it is fulfilled in God, who is always without any contradiction. No body can perceive his own Will to be so united unto the Will of God, as that of the Blessed who are dead in the Lord : On the contrary, many do directly resist his Will ; and the most Perfect follow it at some distance, and not as the Angels and the Blessed do in Heaven : For where God is, all his Will is accomplished ; and where he is not, all is there contradicted. Therefore in this Life we never do the compleat Will of God, as we shall do it in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, where Earth and Heaven will be the same thing : Then his Will shall be fulfilled in Earth as it is in Heaven ; which we must always pray for untill we have obtain'd it, as also, That *He give us daily Bread*.

That is, what we stand in need of daily for the Soul and for the Body. Now likewise we cannot obtain these

(a) f. 95. 98. (b) Rom. 7. 23.

two things during this Life: For he who would have bodily aliment, ought always to labour, and take pains, and be solicitous, both in Body and Mind to obtain his aliment; and when we receive it, it is but in form of a reward, because of our Cares and Labours: For otherwise we must dye for want, if we did not labour both in Body and Mind. So that this daily Bread is not given us, but acquired by Cares and Labours: No more than the Food of our Soul which is the Word of God, which ought daily to maintain it. This is not given us daily; for we must be at great care to search for it, yea, we know not where to find it. So many Glosses, so many Explications of this word, that they would indeed make us swallow Poyson for Bread. We must indeed watch, and be at pains to find this true Food of our Souls. But in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ the Word of God will be given us by the mouth of Jesus Christ himself (c) which will nourish and fully satisfy our Soul: As likewise all things necessary for the Entertainment of our Body, shall be given us without pains, care or labours. The Fruits will grow so agreeable and substantial that it will require no other pains to be sustain'd by them, but the delight of eating them. Our Bodies will have no longer need to be covered or warmed; for all the Elements will of themselves serve them with delight. All this will be daily real gifts; for they will be all freely given us of God without our Care or Labour: Whereas in this World we have nothing, but are as Workmen who receive the Wages of their Labours. So that God cannot have made us ask the things which are impossible for us to obtain in this World. Of necessity he must give us another, in which we may obtain in Perfection the effect of our Perfections: For as much as he never gives any thing imperfectly; neither will he have us to put up unprofitable Requests, as the seven of the Lords Prayer would be: For there is not one of them which can be perfectly given in this World.

For if God did not forgive us our Offences but in the same manner that we forgive those who have offended us, there would befall us no great Happiness in Paradise, because those whose Offences we forgive are not always in our presence, on the contrary, we withdraw from them. Some-

times out of Aversion, sometimes that we may have no more occasion of being offended by them. If God pardon us after this manner, we would be of the Damned Souls: For the Hell of our Soul is no other but the privation of the presence of God: And as we do not give our Goods nor our Favours to those who have offended us, and we think we do them enough of favour when we do not wish them Evil, nor rejoyce in their Misery; If God, after he has pardon'd us our Sins, should give us no more of his Goods and Graces than we give unto those who have offended us; what Felicity could we hope for after the Pardon of our Sins, but to fall again yet into greater Faults! For his Graces and Benefits are necessary for us every moment to preserve us from Evil. And if he did not give us his Kingdom and his Treasures, from whom could we expect for Happiness? For no other but he can give it. By which it appears clearly, that we cannot ask for this World here, *That he forgive us our Offences, as we forgive those who have Offended us*, because we would ask an Evil thing for our selves. It must needs be that we ask these things for the time that we shall live with Jesus Christ in his Kingdom, where being united unto his great Mercy, we shall pardon our Enemies so perfectly, that we shall desire the same Happiness for them which we shall receive from God, who will not only pardon us our Sins, but will deal with us as if we had never offended him, giving us his Treasures and his Glory, which will oblige us to do the same with those who shall have offended us: For it would be unjust for us not to shew to our Neighbour the same Mercy which we receive from God. This we cannot do, nor comprehend, during this miserable Life, where being remov'd from his perfect Mercy, we are as far from the Commiseration of our Neighbour; and we can no ways beg of God that he deal with us as we deal with our Brethren, without begging our ruin, seeing if he should grant us this Request, he would confine us to Hell, which is the privation of the Vision of God. From whence it appears (d). *That we look for another Heaven and another Earth*, where God will grant us all the Requests that he has made us to ask by this Prayer, seeing that not one of them can be granted in this present World.

(d) 2 Pet. 3. 13. If. 65. 17-24.

For if we examine also the Sixth, *Lead us not into Temptation*: We will find that the more we Pray, the more we are Tempted: For the Holy Spirit says, (e) *If you would serve God, prepare your Heart for Temptation.* Could Jesus Christ have made us to pray not to be led into it, while in the mean time he lets us fall into it the more strongly? This would be unjust. He has taught us to ask nothing, but what he will give us in a compleat and perfect sense: But this will be after that we shall have accomplished this short penitence, and shall go to reign with him. Then there will no longer be any thing in us that will lead us into Temptation, for we shall be fully satisfied with the presence of God, nor being able to love nor desire any other thing, nor to move but by the motion of the Holy Spirit; who will desist even our Bodies, which can no longer be led into Temptation, as they will be always during this Life: For the Devil (f) will never cease to make War against us, and more against the Good than the Wicked; who are his own without trouble: But for the Good, he must win them by the strength of Temptations. Therefore we must not hope to obtain in this Life the Sixth Petition of this Prayer, *Which is not to be led into Temptation*; no more than the seventh and last, wherein we pray that God *May deliver us from Evil*: For we shall (g) never be delivered from Evil: Seeing we are still more and more oppress'd with it; and the Just themselves are never without suffering of Evils which the Wicked do them in abundance, Despising, Persecuting and pursuing them even to Death. If these are never delivered from Evil, how much less can others be, who are likewise charged with the Evils of the Soul besides those of the Body, which are common to all? Could we always pray to be delivered from Evil, without ever obtaining it? What vain Prayer would this be, to groan under the burthen of all sorts of Evils, in Body by so many kinds of Diseases; and in Spirit by so many Infirmities, Weaknesses and Inconstancies; and in Soul by so many Sins and Imperfections; and with this to pray to be delivered from the Evils which are inseparable from this Life! It must needs be that God would have us to ask at present what we ought to obtain afterward.

(e) *Ecclesj. 2. 2.* (f) *Eph. 6. 12.* (g) *Rem. 7. 24.*

And if this Kingdom of Heaven were nothing but spiritual or imaginary, as they would sometimes make us believe, why would Jesus Christ have made us to ask so many different things? If Paradise were not accompanied with the Earth, and with all the Creatures which we see, and with our Body with all its Functions, why must we pray to have our daily Bread, when there will be no need of Eating: Why should we pray that the Name of God may be Hallowed, seeing all the Blessed have always Hallowed it, and will never cease to do it, tho' we should not pray for it? Must there not be in this a Sense which we have not as yet discovered, and that this Hallowing of the Name of God ought to be understood, *(b)* that all the Men who are upon Earth may Hallow his Name; for it cannot be done fully by Angels, by the Blessed, and by some particular Souls living upon Earth? But this Name must be Hallowed generally by all Men in Body and in Soul. Which will be when this Kingdom shall come, wherein the Will of God shall be done upon Earth, as the Angels and the Blessed do it in Heaven; and wherein shall be given us also our daily Bread, that is, every day in particular Graces in abundance for our Souls; and all sort of delights to satisfy our Bodies; wherein we shall pardon our Brethren their Sins, as we shall see that God has pardoned us, in giving us besides Pardon Eternal Happiness; wherein there shall be no Temptations of the Enemy, nor of our Nature, for it will not any longer feel any vicious Inclinations; where in short there can never enter any Evil, but all sort of Happiness, of Joy, and of Contentments, Perfect and Compleat, Incomprehensibly Delightful. This is what S. Paul saw, when he said, *(i)* *That they had never entred into the Mind of Man, the things which God had prepared for his Elect.* All the Holy Scriptures are full of this Kingdom which is to come to us. This is the Feast signified by the Parable of *(l)* the King, *Who made a Marriage for his Son.* This Son is Jesus Christ, who is Allied with the Human Creature. His Nativity in Flesh was but the betrothing, wherein he has indeed promised unto Man an Alliance, as he had done before to *Abraham*, which will be accomplish'd and consummated only at the coming of Jesus upon Earth in

(b) *Is.* 45. 22, 23. *(i)* *1 Cor.* 2. 9. *(l)* *Mat.* 22. 2.

Glory, when he shall be perfectly United to Man, Body and Soul with the Divinity all together. This is that also which is signified unto us by the Parable (m) *Of the Master who went into a far Country, giving Talents to his Servants, to every one according to his Ability, and at his return, he demanded of each of them an account to give them their Wages.* Jesus Christ having given his Graces and Talents by his Gospel, has ascended unto his Father, which is the Long Journey: But he will return in his Glory to demand an account of every one of all the Graces received in this time, and to place his faithful Servants over great things, and make them enter into the Joy of their Lord. This is also the Parable (n) *Of the Master who made a Feast, and sent his Servants to call those that were bidden, who all excused themselves: One had bought Oxen, another a Field, another had taken a Wife.* The Birth of Jesus Christ was the time when he came to invite Men to the Feast which God would make that he might take his delight with Men; and as soon as the day shall come, that all shall be ready upon Earth for receiving the Son of Man in his Glory, those who were invited by his Evangelical Doctrin, will excuse themselves. One will say, I have been a Merchant, I must wait upon my Merchandise, I cannot attend it: Another will say, I have been a Labourer, I must take care of my Labours, I cannot attend it: Another will say, I have been Married, I must satisfy my Wife and Family, I cannot attend it. And when Jesus Christ will swear that none of those who were called shall taste of his Banquet: That is, that all they who have received the Gospel, and have not obeyed it, shall never enter into his Kingdom; For no State or Condition ought to hinder the observing of the Doctrin of the Gospel: For Jesus Christ has not brought it from Heaven for the Monks or Religious only, seeing there were none such then; but he has brought it for all Christians in general, whom he has particularly invited to make this Alliance with them. And they who would not observe this Holy Doctrin, shall never taste the Delights of that Marriage Feast. All the other Parables speak of nothing but this Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon Earth, when he compares this Kingdom of Heaven to (o) *A Grain of Mustard,*

(m) *Math. 25. 15.* (n) *Luk. 14. 16.* (o) *Math. 13. 31.*

he signifies, that it will be only the Little and the Humble who shall inherit this Kingdom; and when they shall be mortified upon Earth, they will grow so strongly, that the Angels of Heaven shall come to rest in their Branches. And when this Kingdom of Heaven is compared (p) To a Treasure hid in the ground, that he, who has found it ought to sell All that he has to buy this ground, that he may have this Treasure: That is, that this Kingdom of Jesus Christ is hid from the Judgment of the Wise, being as it were sunk in the ground till the time appointed, and then it shall be found by the Simple, who labour in this Life to find the Kingdom of Heaven; and when they shall discover it, they will sell all that they have, that they may follow this Evangelical Life.

In short, Sir, time would fail me to relate to you in particular all the Parables, with all the Passages of Holy Scripture, which treat of this Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon Earth, because it treats of nothing so much as this, as well in the Old as in the New Testament. (q) The Song of *Saahary* is that he saw by a Prophetical Spirit, the Re-establishment of the People of God in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The (r) Song of the Virgin Mary speaks of no other thing. For what ground would she have had to rejoyce in the Lord, since all his Life was a train of Sadness and Sorrow? What ground would she have had to Sing his Magnificence, since she saw him so Poor and Despised in the Stable of *Bethlehem*, and pursued to Death in his Tender Infancy; as he was all the rest of his Life? What ground of rejoycing to see him Imprisoned and Accused as a Malefactor? (s) The Sword of Sorrow had always pierc'd her Heart, to see her Son, God and Man, Beaten, Torn, and at last Hang'd upon a Cross in her presence. It must needs be that her Joy proceeded from a Prophetick Spirit, in seeing that one day he would be upon Earth in Glory, wherein all Generations would call her Blessed, which has never been done: For none Praise her but a small number of Christians amidst so many Nations: And that sometimes in such a manner, that very often instead of calling her Blessed, they offend her by those Idolatries which they give to her Image; and Jesus

(p) *Matth.* 13. 44. (q) *Luk.* 1. 68. (r) *1.* 46. (s) *Luk.* 2. 35.

Christ himself would not suffer that they should call her Blessed (e) for having born him in her Womb, and suckled him with her Breasts. By which it appears, that it is not in this Life, that all Generations call her Blessed; that it must needs be that She saw in her Spirit that Kingdom of her Son in Glory, wherein her Joy shall be accomplished, and her Spirit shall rejoice in God her Saviour. It will be then that he shall cast down the Mighty from their Seats, and Exalt the Humble: Which as yet has never been done: For the Mighty have greatly Exalted themselves since the coming of Jesus Christ; and the Humble have been, as they are yet, despised and rejected. The Holy Virgin could not lie in her Song called the Magnificat; but she spoke of the time to come, which she saw as present in her Spirit: Which made her rejoice and utter all the things which must come to pass in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, in which all Generations will call her Blessed, and all Souls will Magnifie this Glory; where the Humble will be Exalted, and the Mighty Abased, and Humbled.

I was quite Transported beside my self to hear things so Admirable, which had never been heard of; and I saw them so clearly in my Understanding, that I could not but say within my self: It is so, these are clear Truths. I nevertheless said to her, that many of these things are understood of the Empyrean Heaven, which is the Divine Place where the Souls of the Blessed will live Eternally with God; where the Body and the Soul shall have four Qualities, Agility, Splendor, Impassibility, Subtility, which being like Spirits, will have no longer need of any thing, but the presence of God.

She said; Sir, these are Speculations of Men, who not having the gift of Understanding, would nevertheless conceive something of what they do not understand. If these Bodies of the Blessed had need of nothing, wherefore should God create so many beautiful Creatures to serve only for Man's Misery? For Gold, Silver, Precious Stones, and so many other things not very necessary for the maintenance of his Life, would then have been created only for his Mischiefe, since they did not serve but for this Life, where the most part of Men do Destroy and Damn

themselves for Money. Wherefore then would God have created so many fine Fruits and other things for the nourishment of Man, only for so short a time of Penitence as this livfe? Would it have been worth the pains to have made the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and all the Elements, that they might remain for so small a time? Would God amuse himself for a little profit? No, Sir, this will not go as People imagin; for all the Works of God are eternal, and will never Perish; as I have told you heretofore, all things will continue in their kinds eternally (x) to serve and rejoyce the Body of Man made Blessed, after he shall have finished his short Penitence. Gold and the other Metals will serve to build his Houses, and the precious Stones to adorn them. They will not be Buildings made by Men's hands, with the sweat of their Faces, but wrought by the power of God, who has form'd the Body, and will likewise form the abode of the same Body. And when the Holy Spirit speaks of the heavenly *Jerusalem* (y), that its Gates shall be of precious Stones, and its Walls of Gold. This is not only in a mystical and spiritual Sense, but also in a material Sense; as all things must be perfect and accomplish'd in their time, Spiritually, Corporeally, and Materially. For God cannot do any thing Imperfectly (z).

I ask'd her, If they should eat and drink in the Kingdom of Heaven?

She said: Yes, Sir: Do you not see in the Gospel (a) that Jesus Christ says a little before his Death, That he will eat no more of the fruit of the Vine, until he shall drink it with his Disciples in the Kingdom of his Father. This is applied to the Mystical sense, because they know no other thing: But it will be also in a Material sense, that they shall drink delicious Wine with Jesus Christ, besides the Mystical Wine of the admiration of his Glory, which will inebriate Souls. They shall eat also at the Table of the Lord, where Jesus Christ himself says, (b) That he will come forth and serve us; And when he says, (c) Woe to you that are rich, that are full; for you shall be hungry: He adds, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst; for they shall be satisfied. Read, Sir, the Holy Scripture, you will find there in many places, that of necessity it must be understood that we shall drink

(x) Ps. 119. 89, 90, 91. (y) Rev. 21. 22 (z) Deut. 32. 4. Mas. 26. 29. (b) Luke 12. 37. (c) Luke 6. 21, 25.

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and eat Bodily in the Kingdom of Heaven, with all sort of felicity; Bodily as well as Spiritual: For our (d) Bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghost; in which he will dwell eternally. When the Children of Israel were brought out of Egypt, they eat and drank with Delight: Their (e) Cloaths and Shoes did not wax old, and they increased with their Bodies; even their Nails had no need of being cut: So particularly did God provide for their Necessities. This nevertheless was but the Figure of eternal Life. If he provided for them Cloaths, Meat, and all things which were even delicious, without their care or labour, tho they still offended him, how will he not provide the delights of the Bodies of the Blessed, who will bless him always?

I ask'd her: If there would be likewise human Propagation in this Kingdom of Heaven?

She said: Yes, Sir, there will be (f) Propagation eternally, but altogether Holy; altogether pure and Deify'd. It will be produced more leisurely than in this World, because God by his Mercy has here abridged our days, to abridge our Penitence: But that Kingdom being of eternal duration, will give time and leisure to Propagate stayedly, without Pain or Sorrow, or concupiscible Appetite, but by pure union of Charity in God, which will extend it self to the production of new Creatures, to the glory of their Creator; which is very reasonable: For, since this World was created, few Men have been brought forth who have glorified their God: On the contrary, in all Times and Ages the Devil has deriv'd his Glory from Men; for (g) when there were yet but two Persons upon Earth, they yielded to the Devil, and followed his Suggestions, in abandoning their God: And when the World was fully replenish'd, Men gave themselves to yet greater Evils: For at (h) the time of the Deluge, eight Persons only of all that great Universe were found obedient to the Word of God: And in time of the Children of Israel, when they were brought out of Egypt, to go into the promised Land, (i) two Persons only did enter into it. In the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot alone with his Family did fear God: And when God would have forgiven that People, (l) providing that Abraham had found but ten in it, he

(d) 1 Cor. 6. 19. (e) Deut. 29: 5, 6. (f) 1 J. 65. 23. (g) Gen. 3. 1, — 6. (h) 6. 7. (i) Num. 14. 30. (l) Gen. 18. 32.

would not have consum'd them. And when Jesus Christ himself came upon Earth, all was corrupted, having (m) made void the Law of God by the Traditions of Men; as he reproach'd the Jews with it, who were then his People. And now, Sir, since we have had the Doctrin of the Gospel, what a small number (n) of Persons do you see who have remain'd constant in it? And on the contrary, how many wicked Christians are there besides the Turks, Jews, Heathens, and so many other Sects, who are Enemies of God? Should it not be said that God had created the Earth, and so many reasonable Creatures, only for the glory of the Devil and his adherents, if he did not renew the Earth and make it bring forth fruit for his glory? This would be an evil thing, which God can never do. And that the Creation of Men may be good, of necessity there must be a time in which they may glorifie their God: And if there were no Generation in the Kingdom of God, a very small number would bless him; even tho you should sum up the Prophets, the Apostles, and other Saints, this could not suffice to give glory to God, for the least favour that he had bestowed upon Men. It must needs be that the Generation of the Blessed multiply eternally, as the Generation of the Miserable does multiply temporally from the beginning of the World; or otherwise God would not be just.

I said to her: That some Writers had spoken of the reign of Jesus Christ upon Earth, but that the Roman Church had condemn'd it as Heresie.

She said: Sir, No body can have spoke truly of this Kingdom of Jesus Christ, because it is (o) the hidden Treasure, which has not yet been discovered nor revealed to any. They may well have said something of it according to the Speculation of Men: But they could never understand it; for the time was not come to discover it. This is the Master-piece of all the Works of God; and the accomplishment of all the Holy Scripture. Whether the Roman Church approve it or disapprove it, that makes nothing. Truth continues always Truth. Tho all the World should disapprove it, it will never change. That which is true, cannot become a Lie, by the approbation or reprobation of Men. There can be no Heresie in that which the Holy Spirit has spoken by the Mouth of the ho-

(m) Mat. 15. 6. (n) If. 53. 1. (o) Mat. 13. 44.

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holy Prophets, of Abraham, David, Solomon, the Apostles, and Jesus Christ himself, who have all largely spoken of this Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon Earth, as well by Prophecy as Parables, and other ways, tho the full understanding of it has been reserved for the last Times (p), in which we live at present. All the Revelation of St. John speaks of no other thing. If they would have received any understanding of it, this could not be but by application, and not in a perfect Sense: And they who said they understood nothing of it, have been the most wise; because till this time none has understood any thing of it. In short, Sir, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, are the Treasures of God, Which he has reserved unto Men; of which S. Paul has said, That Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has entered into the Heart of Man, what God hath laid up for his Servants. It were also better to adore all these Mysteries, than to dive into them out of Curiosity: For the great and the wise of this World do understand nothing of them: They will be revealed unto the little ones, for such is the will of God: For which Jesus Christ blesses his Father, (r) That he had hid these things from the great Men and the Wise, to reveal them unto Babes.

I said to her, That I was very desirous to know when this Kingdom shall come, and how it shall begin?

She said: Sir, I do not know the day (s), but that this indeed will be as soon as the wickedness of Men shall be so multiplied, that in Justice they will draw upon them his universal Plagues; which will purge away all Iniquity. Then shall the Son of Man appear in his Glory and Majesty (t) to render unto every one according to his Works. In that day (u) the remnant of all Nations shall appear before him, for the most part shall be dead with distress and fears; and then he will judge them. And those who shall be found dead unto his Grace, he will banish into eternal Fire: But those who shall be found living in his Grace, shall be confirm'd in it, to live in Body and in Soul eternally with him; of whom shall begin the eternal Generation, as it began in Adam and Eve, our first Parents. Then all malediction (x) shall be removed from the Earth,

(p) Dan. 12. 9. 12. (q) 1 Cor. 2. 9. (r) Mat. 11. 25, 26.
(s) Mat. 24. 36. (t) Mat. 16. 27. 2 Thess. 1. 10. (u) Zach. 13.
8, 9. (x) Rev. 22. 3.

and it shall be again blessed. All malignity shall be removed from the Elements, and every Creature, especially (x) the Reasonable ones, who shall live without any Maladies or Infirmities, either of the Body, or of Spirit and Soul: Too much heat (z) or cold, shall not any more incommode them; no evils shall touch them: They shall handle fire without being burnt, and (a) Serpents without being Stinged: Our Passions shall be well regulated, there being no longer Lusts there, neither of the Eyes, nor of the Flesh, nor of the Spirit: No more Sorrows, Griefs or Groanings; no more of Love that heats; no more of Desire that makes thirsty; no more Terror; no more Fear; no more Forgetfulness; no more Sloth; no more Purlanimitry; no more Cares and Anxieties: In short, no more of any thing that can hurt, shall be found upon the Earth: But all things shall serve for the recreation of Men, who shall love one another in a perfect unity in Christ Jesus, being not only re-establish'd into the Estate of Innocence, where in Adam was before his Sin, but with a thousand times more Perfections. Man shall possess all things in the glorious presence of Jesus Christ, (c) who will wipe away all Tears from his Servants, giving them Glories in time to come for their Sufferings, by a freight Justice, each what they shall have merited in this Valley of Tears, for he is the (d) Restorer of all things. Ought not Sir, all these things to be re-established? How many Innocents are there here accused as Guilty? How many of these Persecuted wrongfully? How many Injustices done to the Just? How many sufferings do the Good endure? Does not all this (e) cry to God for Vengeance? Must he not render it? and how could he render it in a Spiritual Paradise as they make us believe? The Body has here suffered with the Soul: Is it not just that it should rejoyce also with it? The Body of Jesus Christ, which has received so many affronts and sufferings, should it not be seen glorious in this World, as it has been seen suffering? What reparation can be made of all material things in a spiritual Heaven? I wish for this glorious Reign, that all the World may see and acknowledge the Justice of God, which will

(v) *Is.* 65. 16, 17. (z) *Rev.* 7. 16, 17. (a) *Is.* 11. 8, (b) 35. 8, 9, 10. (c) *Rev.* 21. 4. (d) 21. 5. (e) *Luke* 18. 7. *Rev.* 5. 8. (f) 2 *Thess.* 1. 5, 6, 7.

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leave nothing of all our good deeds without (f) a recompence; no more than our evil deeds without a punishment, which every one shall receive by the just ballance of his Righteousness: To accomplish which, we must in this World have reparation of all the wrongs which have been done us, and the falshood must be discovered; the Mask must be taken off from all Men, that their deceits and their hypocrisies may be known: How they have dealt fraudulently with the Innocent. All must (g) be discovered at the coming of Jesus Christ in Glory, and all things, even material, which have served for our reproach, must serve for our glory: As to S. Lawrence's his Grid-Iron, and to S. Andrew his Cross: And so of all the other Martyrs, and chiefly the Instruments of the Passion of Jesus Christ, which will shine in his glory like precious Stones, and that materially; for otherwise there could not be had a perfect and compleat reparation, if we looked but for a spiritual Paradise, because we suffer here in Body and Spirit both together. (h) This Kingdom approaches, Sir, for the Plagues are already begun.

I said unto her, That no body believ'd that the last Plagues were begun; nor the Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon Earth.

She said: Sir, (i) The incredulous will go with Sorcerers: For he who has no belief of this Kingdom, can never well suffer the Plagues which go before it. There is nothing but (k) this hope alone that can give force to sustain those so great Persecutions; that there never were any like unto them. It is therefore to be feared, that these incredulous will perish with the Wicked: For if we do not believe that we are fallen into the last times, and that the Plagues are begun, we will assuredly be deceived by that pernicious one Antichrist, who reigns in Persons in Authority, whom we take sometimes for Holy and Vertuous, and believe that we do well to let our selves be guided and govern'd by them, if we lay aside the doubt or belief that we are fallen into that dangerous time foretold by Jesus Christ, wherein Evil is covered with Piety: And if we (m) do not believe that the Plagues which are begun are the beginnings of Sorrows, with which God will purge the

(f) 2 *Theff.* 5, 6, 7. (g) *Rom.* 6. 16. 4. *Esd.* 16. 65. (h) *Luke* 21, 26, 31. (i) *Rev.* 21. 8. (l) *Pj.* 27. 13. 14. (m) *Luke* 21. 9, 19.

Earth, we shall easily be brought to Murmur against him: Yea, we shall fall it may be into Despair, in seeing the best Christians Persecuted by Persons who seem worse than our selves; yea, Churches ruined, the Religious banished; and all that they call a Church, overturn'd and oppress'd in its source. All this will give occasion to Blaspheme against God; in case we do not know the wickedness of Men which had drawn down these Plagues upon our Heads. We will commit a thousand sins of Murmurs against our Enemies, and also against the disorders of those who ought to govern us: Setting our selves to seek Human Succours, which will sometimes do us more harm than our Enemies, and thus we should suffer miserably, as *(n)* do Thieves and Murderers: Whereas did we believe that we are fallen into the last times, and that the Plagues are begun, we would return to God by Penitence, taking all from his Hand, as well the Rod as the Bread: For all these things must come to pass, and by Sufferings we must enter into his Glory, *(o)* as Jesus Christ has pav'd the way.

I said unto her, That I my self could hardly believe that the last plagues were begun, and also that Jesus Christ would come to reign upon the Earth, were it not that she gave me the view and understanding of these things.

She said: Sir, this proceeds partly from want of Application of Spirit, and partly because the Devil has bewitched the Spirits of all Men, that they may not discover the truth of their Happines, nor of their Misery: For if this were known, many Persons would get out of Darknes, and would follow the Light of Truth: Whereas by that infatuation of Spirit, the Good perish with the Wicked: And thus he gains all to himself. To give you a firm belief that Jesus Christ will come to reign upon Earth, Sir, apply your mind seriously to the reading of the Holy Scriptures: You shall find through all that they declare this glorious coming; and all that Man shall receive thereby. This has been figured from the beginning of the World, and by all that has past in it since; all has been nothing but the Figures of this glorious Reign of Jesus Christ. You have now a little prospect of this by what I have declar'd unto you. Search into the matter, you will find the thing more true than all the other mysteries of our Faith: There

is no more obscurity in it, for the time is come for the understanding of it. What the Fathers in past times have explain'd with so much pains, and so imperfectly, will be easie to you, and in a perfect sense. No body will be able to doubt or be ignorant of it, who will submit his Spirit unto God with Humility of Heart. All that Jesus Christ and the Apostles have said, has been fulfilled but in part: But you will find the accomplishment and the perfect sense in this (p) glorious Reign of Jesus Christ: By discovering assuredly that all which they thought fit to declare cannot be understood of any other thing but of this Reign. Remark all the Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, which I have elsewhere explained to you. No body can imagine that all that we ask in that Prayer can be obtained during this miserable Life, and it must needs be granted, that we pray for another Life, which we do not yet know (q), and that this Life also must be material, as well as spiritual: For if it were only divine, we would not ask for daily Bread, nor that the will of God should be done there, or that his Name should be Hallowed: For all these things are done always in the Emphyreal Heaven, where no body has need of material Bread, Spirits being filled with the presence of God: There is nothing there likewise to be forgiven, for no body there offends his Brother: Temptations are banish'd from thence, and Evils cannot enter there. The blessed Life that we look for, must needs be material as well as spiritual, in which we shall have need of all the things which we ask in the Lord's Prayer, since they cannot be obtain'd in this present Life, and Jesus Christ could not have made us ask for unprofitable things, or for those which he would not give. This could not be done by a God who can do and know all things: For it would be altogether unprofitable to ask what we cannot obtain here, and it would be a superfluous thing to ask that of which we would have no need in the Emphyreal Heaven, as they imagine Paradise to be; all the other Doctrins of Jesus Christ, are also like to the petitions of that Prayer: For when he says (r) seek the Kingdom of Heaven, and the rest shall be given you, this also will not come to pass in this Life: For the Servants themselves who seek the Kingdom of Je-

(p) Luk: 22. 16. (q) 1. Joh. 3. 2. (r) Math. 6. 33.

Jesus have suffered many Necessities; and *Lazarus* at the the Rich Man's Feet could not obtain a crumb of Bread, tho' he did not cease to ask it. If the Promise which Jesus Christ has made of giving the rest to those who shall seek his Kingdom were to be understood of this present Life, none if the Friends of God would stand in need of any thing, tho' they should not ask of any, it would be needful that God accomplish what he has promised them. And if the Kingdom of Heaven were only spiritual, as People do imagine, there would be no need of any rest (or other things) after having obtain'd this Kingdom, which would suffice fully. Do you not see, Sir, that this promise of Jesus Christ is to be understood of his Kingdom upon Earth, where he will give besides his Glory, all material things for the delights of our Body? Which he calls, *The Rest*; and makes us understand, that we shall not need to seek and labour to have them, but that he will give them freely as an excess of Blessedness. And when Jesus Christ says, (s) *He, who shall leave Father, Mother, Brethren, Sisters, Lands, or any other thing for his Name, shall have a hundred fold in this World, neither can this be understood of this present Life, for the Apostles, and so many other Saints, who abandon'd all to follow him, had not an hundred fold in Earth, Mother, Brethren, Sisters, Houses or Lands, but on the contrary, had need of many things after having abandon'd them. Jesus Christ himself, after having abandoned the delights of Heaven, says, That (t) he had not in this Life a stone where to rest his Head. How then should his Promises be true, that he would render a hundred fold in this Life? Jesus Christ can he lie, and make all who have abandon'd all for his sake, to be afterward in want of things necessary? which would be very far from having the hundred fold of them. We see the Wicked have ordinarily more Prosperity in Earthly Goods, than the Just. Jesus Christ would be a deceiver, to falsifie his Promise which he has made unto all those who shall forsake all for his sake. This cannot be thought: But he promised to those who shall have left Father, Mother, or any other thing for his sake, that they shall possess Life Eternal, which shall be in that World, when Jesus Christ shall come to dwell with his*

(s) *Mark* 10. 29, 30. (t) *Lut.* 9. 58.

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Creatures; where he shall render the hundred-fold of all the things which they shall have forsaken for his sake for one Father they shall find an hundred; because all those Blessed Ones shall have the Hearts of a Father and Mother toward their Neighbour: All shall be Brethren and Sisters under the government of one and the same Father: And the Earth being purg'd from all the Wicked, shall suffice to give unto the Just an hundred times as much as they shall have abandoned in this miserable Life. Lo, thus the Promises of Jesus Christ shall be accomplish'd in a perfect sense in his Kingdom, which can in no wise be accomplish'd in a perfect sense elsewhere; no more in the Empireal Heaven, as is imagined, than in this time of Penitence. There would need years of time, to relate unto you, Sir, all the passages of Holy Scripture which verifie these Truths; for when *Gabriel* says of Jesus Christ, (u) that he shall *be great, and be called the Son of the most High*; he cannot speak of his coming in the Stable of *Bethlehem*, for he was but a little Infant, abandoned and neglected of Men; where his Grandeur did consist of Poverty and Miseries: And when *he began to be known and to speak in publick*, they call him (x) *the Son of the Carpenter and of Mary*, amongst the common People: Which is very far from being call'd (y) *the Son of the most High*; and how should (z) *he lift up his Horn*, seeing he was wrapt up in Swadling-cloths, and bound with Swathing-bands: And it seems he had not strength to resist King *Herod* and the *Pharisees*, who pursued him to death, before whom he fled, instead of resisting. Do you not see, Sir, that nothing has in this World its perfect Sense? Nevertheless, all that is spoken by the Holy Spirit, must be intirely fulfilled: And if we hope that this accomplishment ought to come to pass in this time of Penitence, we deceive our selves; for the more it shall continue, the more will Men mistake the greatness of God, and the less will they call him the Son of the Most High, and the less will he make his strength appear, that he may give place to Man to use his Free-will. But as soon as the time of the Reign of Jesus Christ shall come, he will exalt his Horn, to exercise his Power, and condemn the Wicked; and he shall be known of all Men for the Son

(u) Luke 1. 32. (x) Matt. 13. 55. (y) Luke 1. 32. (z) Luke 1. 69.

of the Most High: For he will come in Majesty and Power to rule (a) over all things: Whereas in the Empireal Æther there will be no need of exalting his Horn, and shewing his Power, seeing all submit to him by Love. It is therefore of the day when he shall come to reign upon the Earth, that *Zacharias* (b) speaks by his Prophetical Spirit, when he saw the Glory of *Jesus Christ upon Earth*: And when he himself says, (c) *If I be lifted up, I will draw all unto me*, he does not speak but of this Kingdom to come: For he has not drawn all unto him by his death upon the Cross, because the most part of Men has since voluntarily yielded themselves unto the Devil.

The Twenty ninth Conference.

Of the Marks to know that we are fallen into the last Times; and that the World is Judged; to wit, That Men are without Righteousness, Truth and Goodness, before God; and that the execution of the Plagues, makes it already effectually to appear.

I said to her, That I understood sufficiently what she meant by this Reign of *Jesus Christ upon Earth*; that I would apply my self to discover it more, intreating her to tell me the Marks, whereby to know that we were in the last times, and that the Judgments were at present begun.

She said: Sir, observe well the deportment of Men, and you will see clearly, that it must needs be that they are Condemned, for therein you do not perceive any Penitence, nor desire of amendment: On the contrary they grow every day worse, and cannot so much as suffer that the truth of their faults should be shewn them, and reckon themselves more secure in evil-doing, than the Good have ever been in well-doing: For the Saints themselves have feared God

(a) *Zach. 14. 5. 9.* (b) *Luke 1. 68-79.* (c) *John 12. 22,*
and

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and dreaded Death: Whereas, Men at present have lost the fear of God, and fear only Men; and instead of dreading the passage of Death, they dread only the day in which they must lose their Life, which they love more than God. Every one lyes in a desperate Estate, without knowing it, and far less fearing it. God has reason to say of Christians now, (d) *My People has forsaken me*, because no body knows God any longer. Every one lives as if there were no God, and yet they would have Prosperity and Salvation; as if God were our Servant, obliged to serve us by force. We have changed the Order that he gave us, of doing Penitence here, and we (f) would here take our pleasures and rest at ease; and instead of labouring and suffering, we would rule and rejoice. God ordain'd that (g) the Earth bring forth Thorns and Thistles, and we would gather nothing from it but Roses without Thorns. He said to the Woman (h) that she shall bring forth her fruit with Sorrow, and she will needs conceive in Delight; in which she would also bring forth, if it were in her power. So that no body acquiesces in the Ordinances of God but by force; and instead of embracing the Penitence which he ordain'd us, we resist it with all our power; for we seek nothing but ease and repose, In the time in which we ought to labour, watch and be at pains. Thus we resist God and all the designs that he has about us. This is the most assured Mark to discover that all Men have forsaken God, and that no body fears nor knows him any longer. It is very true, that in all times there have been wicked Persons, and such as did not know God: But when all in general do forget him, it is to be believed, that we are assuredly in the last times, and that the Judgment is given out, because the Measure is full, and the Evil cannot be greater than generally it is, and without hope of remedy.

I said to her, That to me it seem'd there were yet many good Men mingled among the People, that all had not forsaken God.

She said: Sir, there are many good Men in appearance, but none who are such before God. They are good Men in respect of those who outwardly do more evil, but I do not know if they do less evil inwardly in their Souls, because presumption possesses them, and hypocrisie blinds

(d) Jer. 2. 13. (e) Hos. 4. 1. (f) Is. 22. 12, 13. (g) Gen. 3. 17. (h) 3. 16.

them. (i) The Example of the *Publican* and the *Pharisee*, who prayed in the Temple, ought to make us fear, that these outwardly good Men will be rather Condemned than the ill-Livers outwardly, because they condemn themselves for Sinners, and smite their Breasts with Humility; whereas the others rely upon their own Righteousness, and become Impenitent. I do not see that either the one or the other are good Men at present: For no Sinners smite their Breasts through Penitence, far less do we see them change their Life, or forsake their Sins: And the Righteous in appearance, do live and die in the presumption of their Salvation, not desiring to change a manner of Life which they esteem to be good; tho all have abandoned God to follow their Passions. If some follow them in Wrath, or in Luxury or even in Robbery, they become the enemies of God: But others who are of more mild Complexions, follow their Passions in Jealousie, or in Self-love, or in the esteem of their own Virtues. Is not all this before God reckoned the same evil? Is it not enough that we have forsaken him to cleave to our selves, and are become Idolaters of our own Inclinations? Tho even they were not Vicious before Men, yet they are sufficient to Destroy and Damn us, because unless (l) we be wholly resigned to God, we can never be Saved. Therefore if God should say to me as he did to *Abraham*, (m) that he would pardon the World, provided there were yet Ten righteous Persons in it, I would not hope for this of being able to deliver it from the Plagues, or to revoke the Sentence by which the World in general is Condemned, because I cannot find so much as one; which I must say with great regret.

I said to her, That I knew divers of my Friends, who seem'd to me to be truly Just and Pious, fearing God.

She said: Sir, if you were in union with God, you would partake of his Righteousness, of his Goodness, and of his Truth: And then you would perceive well, that the Righteousness of Men now is not true; and that their goodness is but Natural, and their Truths are Lies; because all the Virtues which you believe, you see in them, are nothing but Moral Virtues, which do oppose those of God. Their RIGHTEOUSNESS is only Human. They would not do wrong to any Body, because Injustice and

(i) *Luke* 18. 10. (l) *Pf.* 72. 27. (m) *Gen.* 18. 32.

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Cheating, is blamable in all Men of Honour; and he who desires to preserve his Reputation, will beware of deceiving or cheating any Body, and you will esteem such a Person Just, because he renders unto every one what appertains to him. Believe me, Sir, this Righteousness is nothing but a Moral Virtue, which is recompenced by the good Reputation they acquire among Men. * It must not at all be expected that God will recompence in the other World what has been done for this. A Man gives satisfaction to every one, that he may have the reputation of being a just Man, which being obtain'd, he is fully satisfied. Even so is it of GOODNESS, wherein divers Persons are Born, their natural temper being enclined to sweetness, renders them lovely to every body: This goodness makes them take all in good part: Even evil things they desire to believe they are good: If the evil of one were told which might grieve them, they would reject this Truth as evil, and would say, *I will not believe ill of my Neighbour*: And even tho they knew the evil openly, they are too good to resist it or oppose it. This is the disposition of the good Men of the World, who love rather to be deceived with evil, than to believe it, that they may avoid it. All this goodness is but natural, and is recompenced with the contentment they have of being good: They even endure Injustice, without having the force to resist it: And upon this, it will be said of such a Person that he is patient and good: Not discerning that this Patience and Goodness proceeds from an effeminacy of Heart, which makes them presume upon a false goodness and patience, which is nothing but Human, Hypocritical and Deceitful. Even so is it of Moral VERITY, which before God is Falshood. One will say, *I am your Servant*; and he will deny his Brother the least Service! One will say, *I am a great Sinner*, while in the mean time he presumes that he is a good Man! for if he did believe himself truly to be a Sinner, he would seek the means to be converted. One will say, *I am not worthy of drawing near to God*, and he will receive every day the Sacrament, and will say, that it is to receive Grace; which is nothing but a Cloak to the former Lie: For Men experience sufficiently that they have not received Grace by receiving it so often. One will say, *I am for the Ser-*

* Mat. 5. 2, 5.

vice of God; and he is as careful to have Honours and Riches as Secular Persons! One says, that he loves God, and he loves nothing but himself. One says, *I am retired from the World*; nevertheless he has as much affection for it as before, and studies to satisfy himself. In Short, Sir, there is nothing but Lies and deceit among all Men, even those whom you esteem to be good Men, they have nothing but apparent Vertues, which are very displeasing to God, and draw down his avenging hand upon our criminal Heads: Because no body fears God any longer, but by word; and they who fear their Damnation, perswade themselves, that they fear God, while out of pure self-love they fear the evil due to their Sins, that they may continue in them; and they place their Piety in outward Devotions, with which they do more distract their Understanding from God, than fix it upon him. And (n) yet they believe they are Just and Pious, fearing God; tho in the mean time they have neither the one nor the other of these Virtues. Thus you are deceived with thousands of others who are in the good Opinion, that there are yet many good Persons upon Earth.

I ask'd her: How we might know the true Righteousness and Virtues of Men?

She said: Sir, no body can know it as to others, but they who possess it themselves. Therefore I told you, that (o) union with God is needful for to know true Virtue. This union makes us partake of the Virtues of God; so that he who is in God, partakes of his *Righteousness*, of his *Goodness*, and of his *Truth*. The **RIGHTEOUSNESS** of God, is always just (p), doing justly to all, as well to our Enemies as to our Friends, not enduring any Injustice no more in our selves than in others, neither in small matters nor in great. Our Works are always accompanied with this Righteousness, and also our Words, our Counsels, our Business, and even our good Works: Knowing well that without this divine Righteousness, nothing can be good. And even as God never does any thing without this Righteousness; So we do all things righteously; so much as we draw near to God, we are as much Righteous, and no more: and he who partakes of this divine Righteousness, discerns and knows very easily the Righteousness and

(n) *Jf.* 29. 13. (o) *1 Cor.* 2. ii.—15. (p) *Pf.* 119. 137.

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Unrighteousness of others: For if their Righteousness be of God, it will always be conform to that which we partake of the same God, and if it be not, it will directly oppose it. There are some who would believe that one had the art of Divination, when he can discover false things which appear true to the eyes of Men: But this does not proceed from any Divination, but only from the Righteousness of God: When it resides in a Soul, it perceives immediately that these apparent Righteousnesses do resist and are contrary unto the Righteousness of God. For Example, a Judge will give good Justice to a Party, because he is recommended to him by some of his Friends. This is nothing but an Human Justice, because it has had respect to Men: For to be Divine, it ought to have respect only to good Right; which is not observed in the present time, wherein the Proverb says, *He who has good Right, has need of good Help*. It is the same as to Piety and Devotion: If they go to Church, to the Mass, and the frequenting of the Sacraments, out of natural custom or inclination, or because it is good and laudable. This Righteousness is not of God, because it respects our selves or Men. And if you partake of the GOODNESS of God, Sir, you will do good to all Creatures indifferently, as he does, without wishing good to your Friends, and hating your Enemies, or not helping them in their need. But when our good deeds are partial, respecting our Kindred, our Allies, our Friends, and Neighbours; then our goodness is nothing but Human. This is easie to be observed by him who partakes of the goodness of God, who loves nothing but that which is good and conformable to Righteousness and Truth: Whereas Human goodness respects nothing but that which is sensible to Nature, leaving sometimes Righteousness and Innocence without help, to succour its Friends; yea, even to excuse or cover their Iniquities. These are all goodnesses without Fruit, having received in this World the reward of such good Works. For if we do good to our Friends, they will do the like to us; and so we shall be payed, without having right to pretend any other recompence therefore in Heaven. Jesus Christ has advertis'd us of this, (9) saying, When you make Feasts, do not call the Rich, lest they bid you also, and thereby you receive no reward.

(9) Luke 14. 12, 13, 14.

And if you partake of the TRUTH of God, Sir, you will very easily discover Lying, because this strait Truth does always oppose that which is contrary thereunto. There needs but to walk Strait to overturn that which is Crooked. The Spirit of Truth, is incompatible with that of Error. There needs but to speak the Truth simply, to reprove Lying. Many Persons are troubled to understand the Truth, who if they were not in Lies, could not be troubled at it, because it is always desirable and enlightens the Understanding. Truth being God, ought to be loved and received by every one, and as much as it is now out of credit, it is so much an evidence, that all have abandoned God, in abandoning Truth, Righteousness and Goodness. There is no other God but he (r) who is the source of these three Vertues, of which Men now have not retain'd any foot-steps, and at present those are esteemed Saints who have but human Righteousness, natural Goodness, and political Truth, and yet they will not believe that we are in the last Times, and that the World is Judged. What more certain Marks can we have? Outward Signs are a very small matter in respect of seeing that all Men have Abandon'd their God. Draw near to God, Sir, and (s) you will discover it as well as I.

I said to her: That if it were needful to exercise the very same Righteousness, Goodness and Truth, of which she spoke to me, that all the World would Perish, and no body should be saved: For all Men are very far from it.

She said: It is true, Sir, all the Wicked will perish, among whom notwithstanding there will be yet some sav'd: because they are so thro' Ignorance: These indeed will yet receive the Light of Truth, with which they will discover the Lyes, which have been taught them: For many have entred into the Spirit of Error, thinking they did well, and if they had been taught there is no Salvation but for those who resign themselves wholly to God, and unite their Wills to his, they would assuredly force themselves to find this Unity of their Wills with God, and would have resign'd themselves to him far more easily than they have done, to follow so many different Exercises of Devotion. For one has taken the Order of S. Francis, and goes bare-footed, without wearing Linnen upon his Body: Another that of the Carthusians, never

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to eat Flesh, nor converse in the World: Others rise in the Night to pray: Others wear Sackcloth, and exercise Discipline, making long Prayers and singing Psalms, vowing Obedience, Poverty and Chastity, with a great many other Things, painful to the Body and to the Spirit: In which all the People desire to imitate them according to their Condition: Some will fast sometimes a Week, will take Directors to submit their Wills to them, will force themselves to say a great many Chaplets, or other Prayers, and to be in Churches as much as is possible for them, with a great many other things which are troublesome, and oft-times of little profit for the Salvation of their Souls. But if they had been taught, That to be saved they must resign themselves to God, they would more easily have found this Resignation than all those things which are superfluous for many, and would more easily have resign'd their Wills to that of God, than to some Man, subject to all sorts of Passions. Those, I say, having discover'd the Truth will be converted by the Plagues, and will endeavour to approach to the Righteousness, Goodness and Truth of God; as much as they are now far from it, thro' Ignorance. No Body must any longer be flatter'd, Sir. All those who shall not have this Righteousness of which I have spoken to you, (t) will not be sav'd: Neither you nor I, nor any Body, be who they will, can be sav'd, but by God, therefore Jesus Christ has said, (u) *That with Men it was impossible to be sav'd, but that it was possible with God:* To shew that upon this Union with him our Salvation does depend: And that all those means introduc'd by Men are a very small matter, for they can serve only to some for means to attain to this Union, serving for others for great Hindrances: For this Union requires a Recollection of Spirit, and not the Diversion of it to so many different things.

I said to her: That no Body doubted that our Salvation depended upon God: That no Body could save either himself or others: That this Passage of the Gospel was so understood.

She said: Sir, you do not understand me well. Our Salvation does not depend upon God, as you believe it, that he saves one and damns another without our contributing thereunto. This is an Error which puts the Salvation of the most pious in hazard. For God

(t) *Matth.* 5. 20. (u) 19. 26.

will damn no Body without Sin, and likewise he will save no body unless they give themselves to him (x) of their own Free-will. And what Jesus Christ said to his Apostles, *It is impossible as to Men to be sav'd, but that it is not impossible to God*; is to be understood, as long as a Man shall live to himself, it is impossible for him to be sav'd: But if he come to unite himself to God, returning with the Heart to him, he will save him. And when you say to me, That all the World will perish if they must needs Exercise the very same Righteousness of which I speak, because Men are very far from it; it is a certain Truth, that continuing in the State in which they are, they will (y) all perish: For living to themselves, it is impossible as to them: But if they be converted, and return unto God, he will save them. No Body can look for Salvation after the manner that they live at present, for they know not God any longer, all having abandon'd him.

I ask'd her; How she perceiv'd that the World is judged, and that the irrevocable Sentence is given?

She said: Sir, I perceive this by the Justice of God, which cannot suffer an Universal Evil without an Universal Chastisement. When there have been particular Wicked Men, God has condemn'd them in particular: For his upright Justice never exceeds nor diminishes any thing from the Merit or Demerit of Men, doing always justly, as well to the Evil as to the good. Now Men having generally all of them abandon'd their God, have, in doing this, given Sentence of the general Destruction of the World, which shall not be recall'd, because the Will of Man is not inclin'd to return to him; but rather to be the more estrang'd from him, if the Plagues should yet be delay'd. Therefore I affirm with Assurance, Sir, that the irrevocable Sentence is given to purge the whole World by divers Plagues of *War, Pestilence and Famine*, which are fram'd of the three means which have caus'd Men to abandon God. Three general Sins (z) will have Three General Plagues. The first is, that Men have all abandon'd the Love of their Neighbour, and instead of loving him as themselves, according to the Commandment of God, every one endeavours to make War against him by Contempt, Envy and Jealousie: By Quarrels, Lyes and Cheatings. All these things have made Man

(x) *John* 7. 37. (y) *Luke* 13. 3. (z) *Ezek* 5. 12. 15. 21.

abandon

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abandon God in his Neighbour, who is his true Image. They study not only not to love him as themselves, but also to vex him in all things. There is nothing but Wars and Divisions even among Kinsfolk, yea between the Father and the Son. All these Discords together, do they not make an Universal War? We are astonish'd to see the Wars of Provinces and of Kings, without considering that every body does the same thing, according to his Power. A Clown will sometimes fight with his Companion for a Farthing. He does as much Evil, in proportion, as a King, who fights against his Equal for a Kingdom; for God regards nothing but the Wickedness of the Heart, and not the Worth of the Subject. If he permit Kingdoms to be everywhere in Wars, it is by an exact Justice, when all private Men are so already. Could he deny Kings the same Liberty that he permits to all others, since they were all equally created with the Disposal of their Free Will, the King as well as the Clown? Would it be just that God should take from Kings the Power to make War, and permit it to private Persons? He would be a partial God, an accepter of Persons. If we did live in Peace with our Neighbour, God would only punish in particular the Kings which make War: But our Domestick Wars do merit that we should suffer Universal Wars; and that by a just Judgment. Since we will not continue in Peace with God, with our selves and with our Neighbours, it is not at all meet that we should be so with Kings: For our Wars have made us abandon the God of Peace, and draw upon our selves the Plague of War by our Sin of Dissension.

The Plague of *Pestilence* is also justly prepar'd for us: Because all Men in general have abandon'd their God for the Affection which they bear to this miserable Life. It is therefore just that it be taken away from us, since it has serv'd us for a mean to abandon our God, who gave it unto us, only that we might love him, and we have loved the Gift more than the Giver; our Life being the Time of Penitence, wherein we ought always to aspire to that which will be eternal: But, on the contrary, we would be content to lose it (*the Eternal*) provided we might live here always: All Men almost are in this Error; by which they draw down the Plague of *Pestilence*, to put an End to Desires so impious, which have made them abandon their God. This Life must needs be taken away from us, since it serves as a mean to withdraw us from God. The Plague of *Pestilence*

lence is justly sent upon us to give Death to those who love their Lives more than God. As is also that of *Famine*, because so many Men have abandon'd their God, for the Pleasures of the Mouth. How many are there who love (a) Meat and Drink more than Spiritual Delights? Provided the Mouth and the Belly be satisfied, they care very little for God. Is it not fit that they endure Hunger who think of nothing but of filling themselves? This evil is so general that in the best Assemblies of Christians, now-a-days, they speak for the most part of Eating and Drinking, to keep themselves chearful. Is it not fit that this should be chastised with Justice by an universal Hunger, since this Sensual Appetite has caused an universal Sin, by almost all the Men of the World? From whence I draw the certainty that all are judg'd, and that the Sentence is irrevocable: Because no Body repents of these three Sins, which form the last Plagues, and God cannot defer longer to send them (b).

I ask'd her; how we could believe that the last Plagues were begun?

She said: Sir, Do you not (c) perceive that we are abandon'd to the Spirit of Error? That Lying prevails, and (d) that Truth is oppress'd? That Men (e) promise themselves Peace and Security in the midst of such evident Perils? That there is (f) no longer Righteousness nor Sincerity or Fidelity among Men? That Evils are conceiv'd without Fear, and brought forth without Reprehension? That the Just (g) is punish'd as guilty, and the Guilty supported and defended? That there is no longer (h) neither Faith nor Law among Christians, and that they live in a Neglect of God and of their Salvation? Are not these the greatest Plagues that could ever befall the World? They are more to be dreaded than Fire, Pestilence, War and bodily Famine, which can but kill Bodies: Whereas these Spiritual Plagues kill the Soul, which is an Eternal Spirit. Behold, Sir, with the Eyes of Truth, and you will see that all Souls perish without perceiving it. Which is the greatest Punishment that God can ever permit to befall Men.

(a) *Jf.* 5. 11, 12. *Phil.* 3. 18, 19. (b) 4 *Esd.* 15. 16. 14—18.
 (c) *Rom.* 1. 28. 2 *Thess.* 2. 11. (d) *Fer.* 9. 3, 4. (e) *Fer.* 6.
 14. 8. 11. *Ez.* 12. 18. (f) *Jf.* 59. 3, 4, 8. (g) *Ez.* 13. 19.
 (h) *Fer.* 5. 1. 7. 28.

Many say Blindly, *We are at the End of the World, for Wickedness abounds in all places: There is no Trust to be given to any: They deceive one another without Faith or Honesty.* In saying this they speak the Truth, without knowing it, far less apprehending it. Many Signs have appear'd (i) in Heaven, in the Sun, in the Stars, fearful Comets, menacing great Evils, which did affright some at first, but so soon as the Devil had Leisure to make his Adherents study to find out Reasons, shewing that these were but natural things, engendred in the Air, he made the Fear of those threatenings of God, sent as the Forerunners of his Justice, to vanish out of their Minds. The Sea has yielded blood: And as soon as this has ceas'd, the Memory of it has been effac'd. Fire has burnt many Cities, and they have presently found out some Invention to cover all these Warnings which God gives us, saying, *That these are Casual and Natural Things:* As also the swallowing up of several Towns and Cities, caus'd by Earthquakes: They attribute all these Things to future and to natural Causes, saying; *That these Countries, situate toward the Sea, are subject to Earthquakes.* In short, Sir, they make all the Threatnings and Warnings of God to vanish out of Men's Minds, that no Body may enter into himself to be converted unto him through Fear and Trembling. Some Stroaks of Thunder us'd sometimes to shake intire Cities; where the People ran to Confession, to prepare themselves for Death. But now, when they see so many several Effects of the Justice of God, by Men's being abandon'd to all sorts of Sins, and also by all those outward Signs in Heaven and Earth, which have appear'd in our Time and to our Eyes, no body is converted unto God for this: Far less do they Imbrace the Spirit of Penitence. It seems they mock at God's Warnings, saying; *These are Natural Things.* But I would willingly demand of these Ear-flatterers, If God ought not to send his Plagues but by supernatural Things, and to make Chimera's in the Air? He, who has created all the Elements, must not he make Use of them (l) to chastise the Offences which we commit against him? Is there not need of Natural Things to make our Body suffer, which are likewise Natural? If the Bodies of the damn'd shall indeed be punish'd with Natural Things, why should not, in like man-

(i) Joel 2. 30, 31. 4 Esd. 5. 1-12. (l) Psal. 11. 16.

ner our Bodies, which are yet living upon Earth? Since they are not sensible but of Natural Things, they must needs have Subjects conformable to their Nature. The Deluge was made by a Natural Rain: And the last Plagues will be made by Pestilence, War, Famine and Fire, all Natural Things, because the Heaven, the Earth and all the Elements ought to rise up against us, to avenge the Offence that we do against their Creator and ours. If the Fire shall kindle by some accident, or the Earth quake by the Tossings of the Sea, and overturn Cities, would (m) this be accidental unto God, who says (n) that, to him, the Hairs of our Heads are numbred? Would he thus let such grievous Accidents fall out Without his Permission? this cannot be true. But the Devil, to divert us from believing that these things are (o) the beginnings of the last Plagues, makes it be said by his Adherents, that these are Natural Things that no Body may turn to Repentance.

(m) *Amos* 3. 6. (n) *Matth.* 10. 30. (o) *Matth* 24. 8.

The Thirtieth Conference.

How God permits Man to be abandon'd to the Spirit of Error.

I Ask'd her ; *How God permits that we should be thus abandon'd to the Spirit of Error ?*

She said : Sir, (p) God permits it by his Justice, because we have left (q) his Spirit of Truth, to hearken unto and follow (r) Lyes. He compels no Body, leaving every one in the Liberty wherein he created them. If Man therewith will needs abandon his God and adhere unto the Devil (s) he lets him, for he will not take away again the Free-Will which he has once given him, which God will never take back again, for he is (t) unchangeable in all his Doings : And having once found it good that Man should be a kind of Creature altogether free, he cannot afterward find it evil, but will leave him this absolute Liberty unto all Eternity. If he will use it to love God, he will follow the End for which it has been given him ; and if he will use it to do evil, and to withdraw himself from God, he is free : God will not be mov'd for this, remaining always, Just, Good and True. Whatever Man does, God remains always what he is in himself without being mov'd, and without hindring Man to withdraw himself from him, when he will needs do it by his own Free Will. God can lose nothing, even tho' all the Men of the World would follow the Devil. They only wrong themselves. God will never take away again the Free Will that he has given them, for their evil Deeds ; but permits them still to use it, as well to their

(p) *Kings* 22. 22. (q) *Rom.* 1. 28. 2 *Thess.* 2. 10, 11, 12.
 (r) *Fer.* 13. 25. *Ezek.* 13. 19. (s) *Pf.* 81. 12, 13. (t) *Jam.* 1. 17.

Damnation as to their Salvation. All the other Creatures do the Will of God of Necessity, as a Servant does the Will of his Master by force, for it is necessary to the other Creatures, as well animate as inanimate to do the Will of God without their being able to resist it, being bounded, limited and constrain'd not to pass over the Bounds and the Limits wherein God has plac'd them: But Man alone, who participates of the Deity, has the Liberty to resist the Will of God, which he will not oppose, for he cannot repent (u) of the Liberty that he has given unto Man. Thus God permits Man to abandon himself unto the Spirit of Error, and to forsake that of Truth: For he would act against his Goodness, to take back again that great Advantage which he has given unto Man, of his Free Will, with which he ought to rule over the Earth as a little God, independent from every other thing which is not God. And if he did not permit Man to follow the Spirit of Error, when he will needs follow it, he would render him a limited and forc'd Creature, as all the rest, which serve the Will of God by Force, as, Servants and Slaves: Which would be contrary to the Designs of God, who has chosen our Souls for his Spouses (x) in making them partake of his Power, to do that which shall be most agreeable unto them.

(u) *Rom.* 11. 29. (x) *Cant.* 4. 10, 11, 12. *Apoc.* 19. 7.

The End of the First Part.

THE
SECOND PART
OF THE
LIGHT
OF THE
WORLD.

Being a Continuation of the Conferences which *Antonia Bourignon* had with the deceased Mr. *Christian de Cort* ; which deserves to be read, understood and considered by all who desire to be saved.

Written originally in *French*.

S. Paul to the Romans, XI. 19, &c.

Be not high minded, but fear : For if God spared not the natural Branches (the Jews) take heed, lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the Goodness and Severity of God : on them which fell, Severity ; but towards thee, Goodness, if thou continue in the State wherein his Goodness has plac'd you ; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off ; and they also if they bide not still in Unbelief, shall be grafted in : For God is able to graft them in again.

L O N D O N,
Printed in the Year MDCXCVI.

THE
SECOND PART
OF THE
LIFE OF
WILLIAM
PITTS

Being a Continuation of the History of his Life and Administration, from the Year 1766 to 1793.

By JOHN GAY, Esq. Author of the Fables, and of the History of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole.

LONDON: Printed by J. DODD, in Pall-mall, 1793.

TO THE
READER.

Dear Reader,

IT is more than twelve Years since I had the following Conferences in this second Part of the Light of the World, and those also which shall follow in the third Part; which you may afterwards see, when it shall please God that they be publish'd; and I had no Inclinations to make them publick: For all these Questions were propos'd to me by the deceast Mr. Christian de Cort, when he was a Priest in the Roman Church, Pastor of the Church of S. John in the City of Mechlin in Brabant and Superiour of the Congregation of the Fathers of the Oratory in that City; who being desirous to understand the Matters relating to his Religion, propos'd to me divers Theological Questions, touching the Faith and Manners of Christians who aspire to the Perfection of their Souls: To which I answered according to the Wisdom and Experience that God gave me. This the deceast de Cort having exactly noted and set down in Writing, he design'd to have printed it in the Year 1667. But it was afterwards delayed by the Advice of many of his Friends; who knowing the Partiality and Jealousie of many Divines of the Roman Church, were afraid, "that the said

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“ de Cort and I might be put into the Inquisition for
“ having declar’d too openly the Faults and Corrup-
“ tions which are crept into the Roman Church ;
“ telling us, that this would be insupportable to many
“ Zealots of that Religion.

But the deceast de Cort being very earnest to make the plain Truth known to the People, resolved to go to Holland, and to print all these Conferences there, judging it very necessary, that they should be communicated to sincere Persons, who he thought were perishing thro’ Ignorance, saying often “ I was deceived
“ as to Matters of Faith and Manners : And thro’
“ this Blindness I have also deceived others, by teaching them Shadows for Substances ; and I’ll never be
“ at rest till I have communicated to them the Truths
“ of God that you have declared to me : And so by his Persuasions and many importunate Requests, I resolved to go with him to Holland to cause him to print all these Conferences, that we had had together for a long time. I was much averse to this ; because I had not yet printed any of my Writings ; and also the Matters contain’d in these Conferences would greatly shock many who are in the Roman Church, whom I lov’d tenderly, and desired not to offend them, esteeming them my Brethren, and I had never yet convers’d with any, nor had I been in any Place or Country, without the Obedience of the Roman Church: And I knew not what sort of People I might meet with elsewhere : For I imagined I should find there People that were monstrous, or of a different Shape from those of my own Country, where they represent to Children those who are not Romanists, a Wolves

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covered with Sheeps Skins, that they may imprint on the tender Hearts of the Children, a mortal Enmity against those who in all things have not the same Opinions that are profess'd in the Roman Church. This made me afraid to go to Holland to cause these Conferences to be printed.

But after I had seriously recommended it to God, I resolved to go on that Errand: For God made me understand, "That 'tis not Religion that saves the Soul, but the Love of God that begets true Vertue: And that I ought to love all, and to do good to those of every Religion, and to declare the Truth of God impartially. And this inward Voice planted in my Soul an Impartiality towards all sorts of Religions indifferently, without caring to inform my self of what Religion Persons were, or the Places and Countries to which I was to go, nor with whom I was to speak. This has been my Practice ever since, regarding only the Disposition of the Souls with whom I was to treat without considering what Religion they profess'd, or what Party they were of as to outward Worship; since in Effect in all Kinds of States, Professions and Religions I've met with Persons disposed to receive the Truth that comes from God: Yea, some of those that are without the Roman Church, are more ready to receive it, than they who call themselves Roman Catholicks; tho' this they hold for an Article of Faith, that none can be saved out of her Communion.

This is very ill conceiv'd, since God is universal, and he's to be found every where by those who seek and worship him: For he's not fix'd to any material Body.

To the READER.

All Souls who take their Delight in him, are his Spouses, call them by what Name or Religion you please: For all these different Names or Opinions do not make a Christian; but only the Practice of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ makes a Christian. And all those who put in Practice the Doctrine of the Gospel, are Christians and Disciples of Jesus Christ, even tho' they were Turks or Heathens; Of which Professions, I believe several condemn and judge the nominal and professing Christians; since God has (a) no Respect of Persons; and will judge all Men according (b) to their Works. This the Scripture confirms, saying (c) by your Works you shall be judged, and by your Works you shall be condemn'd: And Jesus Christ himself taught the Truth of God his Father, to the Samaritan Woman, and to many other Nations who were not Jews, saying to his Apostles, (d) Go, teach all Nations; He that believes, shall be saved. He even ate, and conversed with Sinners, to see if any of them would receive the Truths of his Father, and put them in Practice; and tho' at first he rejected the Canaanitish Woman as a Dog, yet he shew'd her Grace and Mercy by her Conversion and persevering Humility. For the same Reason he says to Christians, (e) that Publicans and Sinners shall enter into the Kingdom of God, and the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out; which still far-

(a) Acts 10. 34. (b) Rom. 2. 6. (c) Matth. 12. 37. (d) Mark 16. 15, 16. (e) Matth. 8. 11, 12.

TO the READER.

ther confirms this Truth, That Religion does not save a Man; but the Love of God that sanctifies him.

This made me get over all Humane Respects and declare the Truth of the things which were ask'd me by so many different Conferences, all about the Roman Church: For at that time I knew no other Religions; and (with Compassion) I looked upon all those who died out of the Roman Church as damn'd (as our Divines taught.) So that being ask'd by a Romish Priest, I answered plainly to all his Questions: Upon which, many took Occasion to say that I had chang'd my Religion, and was become an Enemy of the Roman Church; which is not true, since being born in it, I will live and die therein, without changing Name or Religion; but only my Manners and Life: And will endeavour to be regenerated in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and to follow and imitate him even to Death, letting Ignorant Men say and judge of me as they please. In the mean time I offer this **LIGHT OF THE WORLD** to all good Souls who seek the Truth, and desire to become true Christians, that they may truly discern Reality from Appearance: For this prevails now through all the World, among all sorts of Sects and Religions, where every one cleaves to the Bark, and does not touch the Wood, fancying that Vertue consists in having a fine Religious Name of that of the Reformed, the Evangelicks, the Catholicks; Yea, that they

To the READER.

they are persons guided by the Holy Spirit, of which the Quakers boast, though all these sorts of Names are false, and not at all suitable to the Life and Manners of those who call themselves so.

For if they, who are called Reformed, were truly so, we would see the Reformation in their Life and Manners : Whereas we find they all live according to Flesh and Blood ; which the Scripture says, (f) shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. They are neither reformed in their Movables nor their Apparell, nor in their Eating or Drinking : They seek in all the finest and the best : They labour and trade diligently, that they may have wherewith to maintain themselves in Pomp, Excess or Plenty as much as they can, without bridling their fleshy Appetites or their Sensualities in any thing ; still covering more, that they may give it as much Satisfaction as they can, that in this World they may have Ease, Honours and Pleasure.

Thus they are called Reformed, though in Effect they will not reform themselves in the least thing for the Kingdom of Heaven. By which we see that they who call themselves Reformed bear a false Name, that makes them Hypocrites, and Deceivers of others and of themselves.

As these also are deceived who call themselves the Evangelicks : For in all their Works and

(f) 1 Cor. 15. 50.

TO the READER.

Practices, there is nothing conformable to the Gospel, but all directly opposite to it: For they do not observe so much as one Point of the Evangelical Councils: For instead of loving voluntary Poverty; they love the Abundance and Riches of this World unsatiably; and they who ought to be the Guides to those Evangelical Perfections, are the farthest remov'd from them, abandoning their Flocks and Churches to find others that afford them more temporal Profit: They are far from imitating the Apostles, who said (g) freely I have received, and freely I give thee; since these modern Evangelicks give at the greatest Price, and to him that bids most. And therefore they do not justly bear the Name of Evangelicks, since they neither teach nor Practise so much as one Council of the Gospel, and have nothing but false Names and Parades, that they may appear to be in the Sight of Men what they are not at all in the Sight of God.

No more than those are Catholicks who bear the Name; since to call one a Catholick, is to say, he is a Person joynd in the Communion of Saints; which these are not who call themselves Catholicks, since we perceive not any Holiness in their Lives, but much Vice and Injustice, accompanied with Hypocrisie, and seeming Vertue, without any Reality or Sanctification. They boast that they are Abraham's Children, without doing the Works of Abraham; or

(g) Matth. 10. 8.

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that they are Christians, without observing the Commands of Christ: They content themselves to be called Catholicks without conforming their Lives to those who liv'd holily upon the Earth, whose Lives and Histories they read without endeavouring to become holy, as they were whose Feasts they solemnise, tho' they shall never be in their Communion, nor truly Catholicks, till in their Lives they follow their Vertues, and walk in the straight Way that leads to Life. So that this Name of Catholick, will condemn them rather than justify them, where as they presume to be preferred by God to all other Religions; because they are of the most Holy and Perfect Religion, according to the Name of Catholick, which they bear. This would really be if their Souls were united to Jesus Christ in the Communion of Saints; which only and no other thing, makes a Catholick. By which we see that these Persons bear a false Name, since they presume of their Salvation, because of the Name Catholick; and be- lieve they are in the true Church; out of which they say, there is no Salvation.

This would be true, if the Roman Church were the only Communion of Saints: But because Souls who are not sanctified, are not truly Catholick, neither will they be saved for their Religion, since no Religion saves, unless the Heart be truly Religious, or truly Catholick.

In which also those who are called Quakers, do greatly deceive themselves, who through a foolish

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foolish Imagination, fancy that they are guided by the Holy Spirit as soon as they have begun to conform themselves to this Sect, as if it had more Force to sanctifie Men, than all the other Religions together, even the most perfect, none of which can save so much as one Soul: For there is nothing that saves, but the LOVE OF GOD, and not a Religion. Every one ought to hold the Religion that serves him as a Mean to attain to this LOVE without taking his Religion for the End of his Salvation, if they would not be greatly deceived at Death, thinking to plead their Religion which they imagine to be the best, as the Quakers believe they have the Holy Spirit, and so take the Name of Quakers, tho they have him only by Imagination, and false Persuasions; and the Devil makes them believe they are better than all the rest of Men; because they have quitted outwardly the gross Sins of Drunkenness, Theft, Lying, and the like, tho in their Manners they be as vicious as others, presuming that they have the Holy Spirit, which they have not, living in an Esteem of themselves, and a Contempt of others, calling themselves spiritual, while they remain carnal, despising all the Means of Piety and Devotion to adhere to their own Caprices; and they imagine they are illuminated by the Holy Spirit when they are mov'd only by their own disorderly Passions, which do often precipitate them into fruitless Sufferings and Persecutions, with the Scandal of their Neighbour: So that no body has Ground to believe that he shall be saved for being

To the R E A D E R.

ing of the Quakers Opinion, no more than the being of any other Sect or Religion, since all these Names do nothing to the Salvation of Souls: But to be sav'd of Necessity, we must be renewed in the Life of God: And the Scripture says, (h) Obedience is better than Sacrifice.

This shews that it's better to be resigned entirely to the Will of God to be ruled thereby, than to profess any Religion how good and holy soever we think it to be. These material Bodies do not save the Soul, but the Love that it bears to its God will save it, and nothing else. In which Men deceive themselves, when they lay the Stress of their Salvation upon some means which they make use of to be saved. How good soever these outward things be, they give nothing to the Essence of the Soul, which is wholly divine and spiritual, and cannot attain to Salvation, if it be not united to its God, who created it for this End; tho' the Blindness that Sin has brought upon Man's Spirit, does not often persuade him that he shall be saved by other Means: as by going oft to Church, frequenting the Sacraments, hearing many Preachings or spiritual Books, or in being able to discourse of these things, in giving to the Poor out of his Abundance, in making long Prayers and so many other Actions which they call pious; as if God to save us, had need of these things! Which is a great Delusion: For it is only our Infirmary and Weakness that has need of these outward Things: For it is written, (i) that the true Worshippers shall worship God in Spirit and in Truth, and not in the Temple nor on the Mountain; That is

(h) 1 James 15. 22. (i) John 4. 23.

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to say, not in material Temples, nor in Mountains of high Speculations ; but the Spirit and the Heart must be truly possess'd with the Love of God, without which no body will be saved.

Not that I would reject or despise all these pious Means or good outward Works (as these Reformed do blindly reject all sorts of good Works as evil) since these good Works may serve as effectual Means to attain to this Love of God, seeing the covetous Man mortifies his Avarice by giving his Goods to the Poor ; and he who cannot pray to God in his House for the Distraction of his Affairs, does well to go to Church, that he may be the more recollected ; Or he who feels more Compunction and Piety in his Soul, in frequenting the Sacraments ; or has more inward and saving Light by going to Sermons or reading the Scripture or some other spiritual Book, he is oblig'd to use all the Means which lead him to the Love of God, without despising the least Mean that may help his Weakness in raising him to the Love of God ; since every one is oblig'd to seek the Means of his Perfections : I blame only the Abuse that is made of these things, in taking them for the End of Salvation ; whereas they are only Means to assist Humane Weakness, which forgets easily Eternal and invisible things if she be not often put in Remembrance of them by outward things : But I blame those who are so ignorant as to believe that they shall be saved for being of some Religion, or for using the Sacraments, and doing some good Work, since these things do not sanctifie us, being of themselves dead Works which cannot give Life to our divine Souls

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Souls ; and the Devil himself might do all these outward things tho' he shall never be sav'd.

I believe indeed some captious Spirits will take Occasion to say that I am not truly Catholick in speaking against the Use of the Sacraments and other Ceremonies of the Roman Church ; but I cannot preserve my self from the Calumny of partial Persons, who love their Darknes rather than the Light that I offer them from God, who has given me his Holy Spirit promis'd by Jesus Christ which teaches me all Truth, since Jesus Christ himself could not avoid the being calumniated, imprison'd, persecuted, and at last put to Death by means of the Jewish Priests, who said they were in God's stead, and sat in Moses's Chair, as the Priests of all Religions say now : While in the mean time they outrageously persecute the Truths which I learn immediately from God, without Study, without Meditation, Discourse, Reading or any other Means, which would rather prove a Hindrance to me, than an Illustration of the Light of the Holy Spirit who endites to me all things necessary for the Salvation of Souls, and gives me also his Gift of Strength to bear joyfully those Persecutions and Outrages, which these more than Pharisaical Priests exercise against me : For they will not suffer that the Truth of God should come to light by any but themselves, tho' they've rendred themselves most unworthy of it, because they will not apply themselves to the Imitation of Jesus Christ, nor to the Sanctification of their Souls ; and if these be wanting, they shall never understand the inward Voice of God. 'Twould be a great Vertue in them, if at least they would suffer another

TO the READER.

other to understand it: But they can't attain to this Christian Vertue of rejoycing in the Good of another. They cry out against me as the Jews cry'd out against Jesus Christ: (1) Away with him, away with him, Crucifie him. And I believe if the Priests had me in their Power, they would gladly cut me off; and would have done it long 'ere now.

But God sav'd me from their Power that I might yet farther declare his Truths to good Souls who seek and desire them, which in Obedience to God I'll do, even at the Peril of my Life; since Jesus Christ expos'd his to teach me the Way of Salvation: And I entreat the Reader to peruse with Attention this Second Part of the Light of the World, waiting till the Third follows. He shall therein find the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, the Truth of God and the Light of Truth, which must teach all Truth: The Truth of the Impartiality of Christian Charity, and of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and particularly the discerning of true Vertue from that which is but apparent, and the Errours crept into Holy Things more clearly than they've ever yet been discover'd in the World. Receive it therefore as a Present of great Value from her Hand, who loves only the Salvation of your Soul, and continues, Friendly Reader,

Your very Affectionate in Jesus Christ,

Anthoinette Bourignon.

(1) John 18. 15.

THE
SECOND PART
OF THE
LIGHT
OF THE
WORLD.

The First Conference.

How the Opinions of the Learned are injurious to God, they being ignorant of his Works. Of God's Presence, and of his Grace. Of the Liberty, Power, and Weakness of Man; and of the State of Infants before the Use of their Reason.

I Said to her, That never any Body had known so much of the Works of God, and that many Disputes and Questions had been raised in the Church to discover such Secrets.

She said; Sir, I have often trembled upon the hearing so many Blasphemies as they thunder out against God by such Disputes. One makes God the Author of Evil; another makes him the Complice; another unjust

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and partial: some attribute to him the Cause of Mens Damnation; others the Want of their Salvation: every one judges of the Works of God according to his Fancy, Liking, and Inclinations. The Learned do greatly deceive themselves, while they will needs comprehend by humane Sentiments, his Divine Works. If any simple Woman of a humble Heart, would seriously consider the Works that God does in her Interior, she might give a better Definition of all his Secrets, than all the Doctors of the World wou'd ever do with their Learning. They amuse themselves in contending about Words, or some Terms that they lay down upon which to found their Disputes; and thereon they raise great Buildings without any solid Foundation: and the more they will dive into the Matter, the more they trouble it; because God (a) *hides* his Secrets from the great and the wise of the World, and *reveals* them to Babes and to the simple; for he says, (b) *Except you be converted, and become as little Children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: making appear sufficiently, that it will not be by Philosophical Reasons or Disputes that we shall discover the Truth of his Works, but by a dove-like Simplicity.

I said to her; *That many believed that Man has his full Liberty to do evil, but that he is not so free to do well.*

She said; These are all Errours; for Man has even more Advantage and Inclination to do good than evil, if he did not (c) go out of himself, by diverting himself to hear the Discourses of Mens Inventions; for God having created him for Salvation, did consequently imprint in him the Instinct of doing good, and the Will also; because good is always agreeable and lovely. Evil then must needs be contracted from without us: for God being the Centre of our Soul, cannot but lead it unto Good; and if it followed its self, its Bent and Inclination, it could not do Evil: because Evil is (d) without us, we being led to it either by the Devil, or some other Creatures without us, who stir our Passions, and the Powers of our Soul, to pervert them to the Will of doing evil: otherwise 'tis far more easie for us to do good than evil. And as the Ray cannot be separated from the Sun, so the Soul cannot be separated (e) from God,

(a) *Matth. 13. 35.* (b) *Matth. 18. 3. and 20. 27.* (c) *Prov. 4. 23.* (d) *Gen. 4. 7.* (e) *Psal. 13. 3, 5, 7.*

the Fountain of all Good ; because it has the same Relation to him that the Ray has to the Sun. If our free Will did not put a stop to the Rayes of Grace, they would enlighten our Soul continually, and could not cease from illuminating and warming it : But (f) Sins and vicious Affections do stifle and oppose this Light ; which, being hindred, cannot any longer shine into our Souls ; and then, during this Darknes they fall from one Precipice into another. The Fault is not that this divine Sun ceases to shine for one Moment, but that our Sins put a stop to it ; which, if they were removed, this Divine Sun would as suddenly shed forth his Rays. We must not labour, as we think we ought to obtain the Grace of God ; but we must only labour to remove (g) the Hindrances which we give to it ; because Grace always offers it self, being inseparably fix'd in God, who is the *W*ter of our Soul. He cannot leave it : But our Sins hindring him, keep us from enjoying the Effects of this Grace.

I said to her ; *That Man indeed received Benefits from God in his Creation, and his Graces did abound in him : But since he fell into Sin, he has lost these Graces, and is become unable to do good.*

She said ; Sir, you wrong the Goodness of God to speak or believe so : For God has not (b) withdrawn from Man tho' he fell into Sin : He contains in himself all things, and cannot retire from any thing : He is as much the Center of our Souls, since Sin, as he was before, and can never go out of any Place, because he comprehends all in himself. This being so, he does not deny his Graces to any Body : For they are where-ever he is ; and being in the Center of our Souls, his Graces consequently are there with him ; but it is our Fault only that they do not there perform Operations. It is true, if our first Parents had not sinned, we had been born in the state of Innocence, and in coming into the World, had not brought with us a Hindrance to Grace, which we have contracted by our first Parents ; but by accomplishing the Penitence that God enjoyn'd them for the said Sins, we enter again into the same Grace of our first Parents ; since God treats with us as if we had never offended him, their Sins not being able (i) to change the Grace of God, but to subject us indeed to Penitence till we arrive at the Use of Reason ; and then, being transplanted out of the free Will

(f) *Isa.* 59. 2. (g) *Isa.* 1. 16. 17, 18. (b) *Ag.* 17:27, 2°. (i) *Mal.* 3. 6.

of our Parents we enter into our own. If from that Instant, our Will desires to reunite it self to that of God, we shall receive the Effects of his Grace ; but the Mischief is we stray to see and hear the other vicious Creatures, and commit the Sins that we see in others with the Consent of our own Will ; which withdrawing it self from God, puts Obstacles and Hindrances to his Divine Grace, by which it is impossible that we should feel the Effects of it ; not that we are ever rendered unable to do good for want of the Grace of God, which (*k*) always waits that we may make use of it ; but it is because of the small Endeavours that we use on our Part to remove that which hinders this Grace that freely offers it self to us ; so that we cannot say truly that we are rendered unable to do good, since the Sin of *Adam*, which cannot extend it self farther over us than till we are arriv'd at the Use of Reason : Then we are restored to the liberty of doing Good and Evil, tho' all Good comes from God ; he never denies his (*l*) Graces to him who seeks and desires them. For he (*m*) loves us always as the Work of his own Hand, even tho' we be wicked ; and if we feel some inability to Good, this can never be but thro' the Opposition that we will needs make to the Grace of God, who desires to give it us (*n*) more than we desire to have it. This is but to flatter our selves, to say that the Sin of *Adam* has rendered us unable to do good : For 'tis nothing but our perverse Habits, and (*o*) our Self-will that can give us this Inability : We ascribe it also sometimes to the Devil thro' the same Spirit of Flattery ; for the Devil cannot hurt us in any thing without our own Consent : He can only represent evil things to us, our Will being free to follow or reject them ; as also our natural Inclination cannot commit Evil without the Consent of our free Will. Sir, Slanders and Blasphemies ought no longer to be uttered against God ; for he is All-good, All-just and All-true, and can never do any thing that is evil, or unjust, or against Truth.

I ask'd her, *If Man, after having sin'd of his own free Will, could indeed recover again, and return of himself to God.*

She said ; Sir, it seems you would use the School Terms, which have occasion'd so many unprofitable Disputes : For, to say that Man could recover again of himself, would be

(*k*) *Ij.* 30. 19. 2 *Pet.* 3. 1. (*l*) *Matih.* 7. 7, 11. (*m*) *Wisd.* 11. 4, 25. (*n*) *Luk.* 15. 20, 22, 23. (*o*) *Dent.* 30. 11. *Mat.* 23. 37. the

the desiring to shew that he had no need of God's Grace, and that his Conversion depended only upon his own Will. This would be an Atheism, not to acknowledge that all Grace comes from God: For there is no Good but what comes from him, as being the only Source of all Good: If therefore Man forsakes his Sin, and returns to God, this can only be thro' his Grace: but this Grace is always given and never denied to those who seek and desire it; and even God prevents us before we ask it (p). Sir, let us leave these Terms of Schoolmen and use our own Experience: We know well enough how many Graces God has given us, even while we have offended him, and withdrawn from him; how many times has he call'd us back by Remorse of Conscience, by inward Light, by Adversities, by inward Reproofs, and so many other Means which God has made use of to draw us to himself after that we have forsaken him by our Sins? are not all these preventing Graces? If the greatest Sinner in the World would tell the Truth of what he has experienc'd in himself, he would tell to his Confusion, that God has never been wanting to give him his Grace, but he has strongly resisted it: Every one may make this Trial on himself; Why should we amuse our selves with scholastick Terms which are nothing but forg'd Words? We must come to the Essence of the Thing; that is, that God gives always his Grace to Man (q) how wicked soever he be; and when this Grace is not operative, it is still thro' the Hindrances which the free Will of Man gives it: For God does not give his Graces imperfectly, but they have less or more of Efficacy, according as Man contributes thereto, by his Consent or Co-operation.

I might answer to your Question, if *Man can of himself arise again from Sin*, by saying *yes* and *no*: For he cannot recover himself without the Grace of God; but he will obtain it always, even to his last Gasp, (r) if he will by his free Will co-operate therewith. That so many Sinners cannot get rid of their Sins, the Fault is not, that the Grace of God is not effectually given them, but only that they cleave so closely to their Sins, that their Will has not effectual Desires to forsake them. *S. Austin* was one of this kind of Sinners; for the Habit of Sin made him believe that it was impossible for him to forsake them: But no sooner was his Will effectual

(p) Prov. 1. 20, -- 33. (q) Ezech. 18. 23, — 32. (r) Luk. 23. 42, 43.
B 3 than

than he abundantly experienc'd the help of God's Grace, which attended him.

I ask'd her, *what she meant by saying, that having the Use of Reason, we pass out of the free Will of our Parents, and enter into our own ?*

She said ; Sir, I mean that our Parents hold our Will united to theirs, as long as our Understanding is not capable of making full use of its Reason ; in that time they may give us to God or to the Devil by their free Will ; because nothing can continue void neither in Grace nor in Nature ; it must needs still subsist in something : Now free Will cannot subsist in an Infant, for it is not yet capable of it ; neither can it subsist in God, since he has given it to Man in creating him : He cannot retake what he has once given ; for a thing given, is no more his who gives it : Of Necessity therefore, this free Will must continue united to that of our Parents, till we have arriv'd at the Use of Reason, and are capable of being able to use it our selves, as the free Will of all Men remained in that of our first Father *Adam*, and this by an equitable Justice, because God gave to all Men free Will in the Creation of the first : so that *Adam* was free to save or damn all Men, who died before the Use of Reason ; but having lived till they attain to the Use of it, every Man enters into the same Liberty of saving or damning himself into which *Adam* was created ; For God has created all Men in *Adam*, and has not since taken from or added any thing to them, because he maintains eternally (s) what he has once done, never changing it : All his Creatures will be upheld in their kinds to all Eternity, and none of the Works of God shall be altered from the State in which he has plac'd and order'd them ; so that we are born and abide in the Will of our Parents as we were, and abode in the Will of our first Father *Adam* ; but as soon as we attain to the Use of Reason, we are put in Possession of our own free Will.

I said to her ; *If it be so, that our free Will remains in the Power of our Parents, till we have attained to the Use of Reason, where can the free Will of Children remain who lose Father and Mother in their Infancy, or as soon as they are born ?*

She replied ; Those, Sir, abide in the Will which their Parents had in their Conception and Production, or as they

leave them when they die. In whatsoever Will they leave their Children when they die, these abide in it till they have attained the Use of Reason ; for then they are always put in possession of their own Will, whether they have been till then, given to God or to the Devil ; they can nevertheless choose the one and leave the other : But the Child who has been given by his Parents to the Devil, shall have much more Difficulty of returning to God, than he who by his Parents has been given to God, because of the Bent to Evil which he has already contracted : He must do a far greater Violence to his Nature, than he that has been habituated to Good from his Infancy, because Custom is another Nature; so that it is very hard for a Child train'd up in Evil, even till the Use of Reason, to forsake or change it afterwards : Therefore he who is born of good Parents, fearing God, has great Advantages beyond him who is born of *Mahometans*, *Jews* or evil *Catholicks*; who must use great Efforts before he overcomes the Evils acquired during his Weakness and Childhood. Nevertheless, God will never be wanting to give him Grace to do this, if he hath an effectual Desire and Will for it ; for he created Man for no other end but to serve him, and he can deny him nothing that is necessary for his Salvation : On the contrary, he affords him on his Part all Occasions and Means of Salvation, even tho' he be born of evil Parents or Sorcerers. They have no more Power over their Children after they are come to the Use of their own Reason, (t) if so be they will apply it to know and love God : For they are put in such a State as if they were beginning to be born, except as to the evil or good Habits contracted in their Childhood.

I said to her, *That we see two Children sometimes begotten of the same Father and Mother, and yet the one enclined to Good and the other to Evil.*

She said, This may very well be, Sir, because Fathers and Mothers are not always in the State of Grace ; sometimes they fall from it, and afterwards they recover it : The same befalls their Children, as long as they have the free Will of these Infants in their Power, it is still united to theirs ; and while the Father and Mother live, they may put the Souls of their Children being yet in Childhood in Favour or Disgrace with God : Therefore one may be enclined to Good

(t) *Ezec.* 18. 14, 17.

and another to Evil, according to the divers Dispositions and Desires of the Parents, who at one time give one of their Children to God, and at another time give another to the Devil. They may indeed give their Blessing to one of these Children of the same Womb, and their Malediction to another (*u*), which will operate in their Children so long as they are not yet arriv'd at the Use of Reason ; because their free Will is united to that of their Fathers and Mothers. From this Ground has proceeded the use of giving a Blessing, which Use has pass'd beyond Father and Mother to the Priests, as being the spiritual Fathers of Christians, tho' they have not the same Power that the natural Fathers have ; for they have not co-operated to the Formation of their Body, nor yet very often to the Instruction of their Souls, which Fathers and Mothers ought to do under Pain of their own Damnation. We have seen Examples enough of the Power which Parents have over their Children ; for many have received the Devil in their Body by some evil Wish of their Fathers. (*x*) *Jacob* prospered and was bless'd by the blessing of his Father, tho' he was not his eldest Son. Many Curses have befallen (*y*) some Children for the Sins of their Fathers ; and this is just ; because the free Will of the Child remains always depending on that of the Father, till he hath received full Judgment to be able to use it himself : Therefore the People cried at the Condemnation of Jesus Christ, (*z*) *His Blood be upon us and on our Children.*

I said to her, *That it fell out often that good Fathers and Mothers had evil Children ; and on the contrary, those who were very evil, have had very good Children.*

She said, This falls out, Sir, when the Children of good Parents have attain'd to the Use of Reason, being put in Possession of their own free Will they forsake the good Instructions of their Parents, and contract evil Habits by bad Conversation, or by other Means, which turn them away from their Parents Benediction to follow their own perverse Will, over which the Father has no more Power, since they are emancipated from the Power of their Fathers Will. In like manner, when the Child of an evil Father becomes good and lives well, this is still after he has acquired the Use of Reason, and that then opening the Eyes of his Understand-

(*u*) *Eccles.* 3. 8. (*x*) *Gen.* 27. 33. (*y*) *Exod.* 20. 5. (*z*) *Mat.* 27. 25.

ing to consider his evil Life, he returns to do good by his Liberty and his free Will, in which the Conversation of good Men does greatly help him : But as long as he continu'd in the Power of his Fathers free Will, he must of necessity be damned or saved according to the Disposition of his said Father ; and this by an equitable Justice, because of the great Sympathy there is between the Father and the Child, as being Flesh of his Flesh, and Bone of his Bones : And as the Child who is in its Mothers Belly, receives no other Nourishment but that of the Mother, who may by her Food, give Life or Death to her Infant, which is in her Power so long as she bears it in her Womb ; even so is it of the Soul by the great Sympathy there is between the free Will of the Father, and that of his Child ; Tho' they be two Souls, they are nevertheless dependant upon that which has its full Reason ; as the Body of the Infant and of the Mother do both of them depend upon the Food which the Mother takes ; because she alone is capable of receiving it to make it pass to her Infant : so that these two Bodies are reputed but one till the Infant be brought to Light, and become capable of receiving its own Food : Then the Mother is no longer capable of causing Life or Death to it, except with what the Child may take of it self. God acts ordinarily as to our Soul, the same way that he does as to our Body, at least by Similitude.

I said to her ; *That she gave me very profound Thoughts ; that never any Body had searched so far into this Matter ; but that all they whose Spirits were perplexed about the Reasons why God damn'd one Infant and saved another, did still refer to the Power of God, and to his admirable secrets.*

She said ; Sir, God will never damn any Body ; (a) for being the source of all Good, He cannot do any Evil ; and the Damnation of a Soul is the greatest Evil of the World.

The loss of all the Wealth, and all the Bodies of Men, together is nothing in comparison of the Loss of the Soul of the meanest Infant. How durst you believe that God would do so great an Evil as to damn it ? I have already told you, Sir, that People do nothing but blaspheme against God on all Occasions, and this for want of not considering sufficiently his Works which are comprehensible to our Senses. If our Understanding did apply it self

seriously to consider them, they are all so clear, so just and good, that no body can with Reason form a Doubt about them. God has created all Men unto Salvation, and none to Damnation, having given to every one Grace sufficient for his Salvation. If some are damned, it is their own Fault, and always with their own free Will. God has Power to save One and damn Another, but he will never do it, because his Almighty Power will never depart from his Righteousness and his Goodness. We make God, as it were the Complice of our Passions, when we say, he saves one Child and damns another, whom he could not have created but to save them, without doing an Evil, and an unjust Thing; which the Child might reproach him with who should find it self damn'd before it was capable of committing any Sin. It might say with Reason, Wherefore hast thou created me to damn me? It had been better for me to have continued in the Nothing from whence thou hast taken me, than to have damned me after my Creation. Those who referr to the Almighty Power of God, in the Damnation of an Infant, do tacitely condemn him of Injustice; for God should use his Almighty Power Unjustly: which he cannot do. There cannot be admirable Secrets in that which is not: Nothing is to be admir'd there.

I said to her; *That at least God did permit a Child to be born of an Heathen Parent, or of an evil Christian, or to die before the receiving of Baptism.*

She said; God permits this as he permits all other things. On God's Part the Heathen were born to Salvation, as well as good Christians; if they are become Evil or Heathenish, it is their own Fault, because he has created all Men in creating of *Adam*, who was certainly chosen by God to Salvation, with all his Posterity. And having given to him, as to all others, a Liberty and Free-will, he must needs permit every one to use it according to his Pleasure; for otherwise he would not be just to hinder every one from enjoying this Gift of his Free-Will. 'Tis thus that all Evils are committed in the World: Not (*b*) that God permits Evil, but he only permits Men to make use of their Free-Will. This is a most good thing that God does not withdraw from Man that first Liberty which he gave him as

(*b*) *Eccles.* 15. 20.

the greatest Treasure which he could ever receive; and if he abuse it, 'tis for himself: For after that God has made all things beautiful and good, he does not change them any more, but lets second Causes act: If they be well applied, he permits not a bad Use to be made of them; but he cannot hinder it when Man does it of his Free-Will. For Example, God has given to Man the Industry to make Knives for the necessary Uses of his Entertainment: This is a good and very convenient thing; but if with the same Knife he comes to kill his Brother, can it be said that God has permitted him? no ways, for if he had ask'd permission of God, he would have forbidden him. Even so is it as to the Children which are born of Heathen Parents, or Evil Christians, or other Enemies of God. This is not his Permission, but the Wickedness of those who are become Enemies of God through their pure Malice, and if they beget Children God will not hinder them, because he has ordain'd this natural Production, which he will never change, for it is very Good in it self, as are all the Works which he has made. Man does all Evil only by the Consent of his evil Will, and not at all by the Permission or Consent of God, who cannot but do all Good, without ever permitting Evil, except indirectly, in permitting Man to use his Free-Will.

The Second Conference.

Of the State of little Infants, which come from good or evil Parents: And of Baptism.

I said to her; That Infants who die without Baptism, and are come of good Christians, are damn'd without their own Consent, or that of their Parents, who dedicate them to God; together with their own Souls; and so they cannot have co-operated to the Damnation of their Children.

She said; Sir, here are many things to be considered, because Parents are often guilty of the Death of their Children through Negligence or Intemperance, and a thousand other Accidents which fall out as to this Matter. I believe many will be found guilty of Murder before God who

who are not aware of it : But as for Infants who die before Baptism without the Fault or Co-operation of their Parents, these are certainly saved by the Will and Desire of the Free-Will of their Parents ; for God can damn none but those who die in sin, either actual or original. Now the Children who die before the Use of Reason, cannot have committed actual Sins, for they are not yet capable of them ; and if their Parents are true Christians, they have certainly satisfied the Penitence due for the *Sin of Adam*. If their Children partake of their Sins till they have attain'd the Use of Reason, by the same Consequence, they partake of their Merit and their good Works, because they are still reputed the same thing (*a*) being sympathetically but one Body and one Soul, tho' in Effect they be two, and that separated when the Child comes to the Use of Reason : So that when a Father and Mother, having begot their Children in the Grace of God, do offer and consecrate them to him with all the Power of their Free-Will, if they come to die e're they are baptized, they go assuredly to enjoy God, as did all the Children who died before Circumcision in the *Old Law*, as in the *New* those of the first Christians, who died e're they were baptized ; in which State, a great many died, because then it was not the Custom to baptize young Children, as they do now.

I ask'd her ; *If she believed that Infants begotten of truly Catholick-Parents who had offered them to God, dying without Baptism, could be saved ; and that they who died after Baptism, having been begotten of wicked Parents, who of their Free-Will had given them to the Devil, were damned.*

She said ; Yes, Sir, the first are saved by the Free-Will of their Parents, and the second (†) are damned by the Will of theirs ; because both of them, the Good and the Bad, had the Free-Will of their Children joyn'd to their own, and might save and damn the Soul of their Children, as they might save and damn their own Soul ; because they were inseparably joyn'd and united together for Good and for Evil : So that Baptism cannot save the Soul of a Child who is without the Grace of God thro' the Free-Will of his Parents ; and the want of this Baptism, cannot hinder the Salvation of an Infant, who is in the Grace of God thro' the Free-Will of his Parents, tho' he should die without being baptized : For if this outward Baptism be so necessary to

(*a*) *Pf.* 112. 2. *Rom.* 11. 16. 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. (†) *Pf.* 58. 4.

Salvation, the Primitive Christians, and they who followed them, would have baptized young Infants ; and likewise all those immediately who came in to be Christians : On the contrary, they kept many in the State of *Catechumens* for a long Space of Time, during which, they might die, as 'tis to be believed many did. Those who had the Will to follow Jesus Christ perfectly, should they have been damned for not having receiv'd the outward Sign of Baptism ? No, no, Sir ; It does not go so before God, as Men make us believe : For a real Desire only to be a Christian, is capable to save us, even tho' we should die without Baptism ; because God *(b)* searches the Heart and tries the Reins, *(c)* having more Regard to the Baptism of Desire than to that of Water, which is given only to confirm the Will of the Heart of Man ; and if we should be surprized with Death e're we have made this outward Confirmation, we should not for this, cease to enjoy Eternal Life, and to reign with God in his Glory.

I said to her ; *That many Fathers had written of the Necessity of being baptized, and that it was taught thro' all the Roman Church, that Baptism gives Salvation to all those who receive it, that it even cleanses from all actual Sins, if we have been defiled with them before Baptism.*

She said ; I know not what the Fathers say, nor what is taught by all the *Romanists* ; but I declare to you what God makes me know and understand in the Inward of my Soul. I do not think that all they who are baptiz'd, shall be sav'd ; for Jesus Christ has said that *(d)* *they who believe and are baptiz'd, shall be saved.* Now Infants newly born are not capable of believing ; and if their Parents be wicked, they likewise have not Faith to believe in the Name of their Children ; how therefore can Baptism work Faith, since Jesus Christ places it before Baptism ? Faith *(d)* must be the chief Piece for working Salvation ; which being wanting, Baptism can do nothing : How would you therefore have wicked Children to be saved by Baptism ? For Example : A Sorceress being with Child, gives her Soul to the Devil, and also that of the Child which she bears, and as soon as it comes into the World, it is carried to Baptism, and thereafter dies ; By what do you think that this Child should be saved ? If it be not capable of having Faith, and if its Parents have denied

(b) Jer. 17. 10. *(c)* 1 Pet. 3. 21, *(d)* Mark 16. 16. *(e)* Eph. 2. 8. Heb. 11. 6.

God, should the Water of Baptism alone have more Force than the Free-Will of its Parents, who would give it to the Devil with the Consent of their Will? Can God resist their Will, after having given them the Power of enjoying this Free-Will, both in regard of their own Salvation, and that of their Children? We see that by an exact Justice, Subjects bear the Punishment of the Sins of their Kings, (e) as David's People were chastized for the Adultery and Murder which their King had committed; How should not Children bear it with much more Reason for the Sins of their Parents (f) who have much more of Union and Dependance than the King with his Subjects, who has nothing over them but a voluntary Submission which they yield to him?

I said to her; *That no Christians doubted but that a Man must be baptized to be saved, and that none could enter into Paradise without having received Baptism.*

To which She replied; Sir, if this were true, it would be a great Unhappiness to many good Men who are dead long ago; because many were not baptized aright, thro' the Fault of the Priest, who, may be, did not pronounce the Words of Baptism, thro' Neglect, or his Mind being carried otherwise, or he had not the Intent to baptize, or, which is worse, if the Priest, who baptized was a Sorcerer, as it falls out but too often, and instead of baptizing Children in the Name of God, he should give them to the Devil; all these Persons ill baptized, must according to your Saying be damned, even tho' they should have lived holily, in case this Baptism were so necessary to Salvation. God would be cruel thus to damn Persons for the Fault of some wicked Priests, who had no Relation neither to their Souls nor their Bodies: Nevertheless it should be in his Power to save or damn all those whom he should baptize. Truly, Sir, these Sentiments which they have of God, are insupportable to me, because they contradict his Justice and Truth: They must be ignorant of him, to believe that he would yield up the Salvation of his People to the Disposal of some wicked Man, who adhering to the Devil, might give him all the Souls of those whom he should baptize. If he left us the Free-Will (g) to save or damn our selves, and that he himself would not reserve this Power over us but still leave our Free-Will (h) to act, without forcing us

(e) 1 Sam 18. 19. and 20 Chap and 24. (f) Exod. 20. 5. Ps. 58.

4. (g) Eccles. 15. 14, — 17. (h) Ps. 110. 3.

to Salvation, nor yet hindring our Damnation, when such is our Will, how should he give to a Man the Power of being able to damn us by an evil Baptism? There can be no Appearance of Truth in this; and if it be difficult for you to believe that Parents have the Free-Will of their Children in their Power, how is it not much more uneasy to you to believe that a Priest should have the Power to damn so many Persons thro' his Fault of not having the Intention to baptize them aright? For Parents have contributed to the Formation of the Body, and the Soul of their Children; whereas this Priest has never known them: And what Jesus Christ said to the young Man in the Gospel (i) *that to be saved, he must keep the Commandments*, would not be true in case Baptism were so necessary, seeing he who should keep them without being baptized, could not be saved, since Salvation depends on Baptism.

I was so convinc'd by such powerful Reasonings, that I knew not what to reply: Nevertheless, I yet said to her, that Faith was necessary to Salvation with Baptism; but that it is supposed the Faith of the Parents supplies that of the Children; and that the Godfather and Godmother are likewise taken to confirm it in Name of the Children.

She said, Sir, it is an ill-contriv'd thing to baptize Children before the Use of Reason: For they cannot have Faith, and their Parents or Godfathers and Godmothers are also sometimes void of it: They content themselves with doing the outward Ceremonies without considering what is done. Baptism is an outward Sign to shew that he who is baptized, gives up and consecrates himself to the Service of God, and will live in the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, renouncing the Devil, the World, and its Poms. This is what he ought to do in the inward of his Soul who desires to be baptized, and then to come publickly to the Font of Baptism to confirm the Vows and Promises that he has made to God in his Heart, that they may be publickly known and own'd by the Church: But in the Baptism of new born Infants, nothing of this can concur; For the Infant being weak, has not yet the Will to give it self to the Service of God, or to follow the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, nor yet to renounce the Devil, and the World, and its Poms: For it has no Sense nor Understanding more than a silly Beast; and the most Part of Parents, who

(i) *Matth. 19. 17.*

ought to supply the Defect of the Infant, have not Faith themselves, and cannot teach them to follow the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, since they themselves will not do it. On the contrary, so soon as their Children begin to have any little Judgment, they teach them to follow the World and its Poms, which is very far from minding them, that they have renounced it by Baptism: What Effect therefore can this outward Sign have, when nothing is effectuated in the Heart of him who receives it, neither by himself nor by his Parents? And when Godfathers and Godmothers speak in the Name of the Infant, they lye: For they say that he desires to be baptized, and the Infant cannot have this Desire. They say, that he renounces the Devil, the World and its Poms, and as soon as these outward Ceremonies are ended, they never think more on what they have promised in the Child's Name; far less do they acquaint him with it when he is grown up, to the end the Child may remember the Promise which he made at Baptism: For in doing this, they would give a Reproof to themselves; because neither Father, nor Mother, nor Godfather, nor Godmother, nor any Body at present, observes the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, tho' all Christians are outwardly baptiz'd. They would count him a Fool or a very Precisian who should affirm that we are oblig'd to keep and observe the Evangelical Life, because it is not any longer in use: They would even be ashamed to renounce the World and its Poms, because the most wise and the most holy follow the World and its Poms. The Wise say that one must live civilly, *and maintain himself in Honour*; and the Saints at present say, *that a Man must accommodate himself to the World, that we cannot make a World by our selves*. We see the most Reformed, Monks study to please the World, desiring to be lov'd and honour'd by it, and would be very sorry to be hated by the World, as Jesus Christ foretold his Servants (k) should be. On the contrary, every one seeks to draw the World to himself, and to have its Friendship, to the end, that having gain'd the Heart, he may likewise gain the Purse. Are not these fine Christians in Parade and not in Effect! For they have no sooner renounc'd in Baptism the World and its Poms, than they think of nothing but to follow and to love it; as if their Promise were nothing but a Formality of Words; They do with God, as they would do with a Fool, promising him a great many things to please him,

(k) *Joh. 15. 18, 19.*

without having any Desire to give him them. Baptism ought not to be received, but by him who resolves in himself to consecrate himself to God, and to follow the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, which he ought to know before he be baptized, and resolve of his own Free-Will that he will follow it, quitting the Maxims of Men, which are all contrary to those of Jesus Christ. (1) The Christians of old did so: No body was made Christian but they who of their deliberate Will would consecrate themselves to God, and follow the Doctrine of Jesus Christ; but at present, they force every one to be baptized before they have the Use of Reason without knowing what they do, or what they promise.

I said to her; *That the Custom of baptizing Children in their Infancy, was Instituted on good Grounds, to the end no Christians might die before they were baptized, that all those who died in their Childhood, might assuredly be saved.*

She said; Sir, I believe rather that the Devil invented this to the end no Christian might be saved; as it falls out that very few shall be saved of those who are baptized in their Infancy; because, when they are outwardly baptized, they believe they are sufficiently assured of their Salvation, (†) which is the greatest Mistake in the World: For Baptism operates nothing in our Souls, no more than the other Sacraments; but according to their Disposition. How can a Child without Judgment have the Dispositions requisite for receiving Baptism? If their Baptism were delayed till they had their full Reason, we would certainly yet find true Christians; for they who had no Mind to follow Jesus Christ, would not be baptized, unless it were out of Hypocrisie: But at present every body thinks himself a good Christian, if so be he have been outwardly baptized, without considering that this Sign gives nothing to our Souls (m) if we have not suitable Dispositions. If they were not baptized in their Infancy, all those who desire to be saved, would study to know what is necessary for becoming true Christians, and would have no Rest till they had obtained this Happiness; but at present, every one rests satisfied with this outward Baptism, not considering that to be Christians (n) they must follow the Instructions of Jesus Christ; without which, it had been better they had never been baptized. It is just the same as if a Servant should go hire out himself to serve some Prince or Lord, and as soon as

(1) Acts 2, 41, 2, 37. (†) Rom. 2, 28, 29 (m) Pet. 3, 21. (n) Luke 14, 26, 27, 33.

he had got on his Livery, should quit his Master to give himself to Robbery, setting himself to steal and rob in the same Habit, which would serve him the better to catch his Prey: For the Merchant who should see him clothed with some Prince's or Lord's Livery, would not be aware that he were a Robber, till he saw the Effects, of it: But if this Robber were some Day seiz'd by Justice he would be more severely punish'd for having committed his Thefts and Robberies in some Prince's Livery, than if it had been in his own Habit. Even so it is when a Person is baptized, and immediately abandons himself to the Vanities of the World; he deceives God and the World, and renders himself subject to greater Chastisements than if he were not baptized; because this outward Sign which should serve him to obtain Grace, serves for his greater Condemnation, as the Livery serves the Robber. We see the Devil has found out this Invention to baptize young Children, knowing well that nobody when he came to Age would remember what he had done so soon as he was born, and that he would easily banish out of Mens Minds the Promises which they made in Baptism. He has also invented the not reiterating of Baptism, fearing least peradventure some coming to be converted, should come afterwards to receive Baptism in a due manner and with requisite Dispositions. All these Devices have been covered with a pious Pretext, *That no Christian should die without having received Baptism.* This every one has asserted under this Appearance of Piety, which nevertheless is founded but upon a false Supposition of this express Necessity of Baptism for Salvation; which cannot be true, seeing so many true Christians died in the Days of Jesus Christ and the Apostles in their Non-age, or while they were yet but *Catechumens*, or at the Instant of their Conversion. Should not all these Persons be saved after they have been in Heart and Affection consecrated unto God? as also those who should yet at present live according to his Law in a Country where Baptism is not used. I would fain know, Sir, if you read any where that the Apostles themselves were baptized; and if you could doubt of their Salvation, tho' they had not been?

The Third Conference.

How the Devil has crept into the Church as Antichrist, and is there maintain'd and authoriz'd.

I Ask'd her, *How the Devil could start these things which are decreed by Councils?*

She said; Sir, do you not remember that I have already told you, that the Devil slip'd into the Church from the time that Jesus Christ would establish it? He had then almost all the World at his Devotion, and he needed not great Labour to maintain the World in its Wickedness; for it was as it were become natural to it: But how soon he saw that Jesus Christ came to enlighten the World, and to make known their Sins to them, that he might bring them back to Repentance; The Devil then (a) unites all his Force and Power to oppose himself to this Light, and every way to countermine the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. From that time he got the Name of *Antichrist*; because he sets himself against Christ; he has ever since continu'd in the Church, that he might destroy and ruine it if he could; and from time to time he has gain'd (b) some who have followed his Suggestions and his Malice, whose Number has always encreas'd, and he has maintain'd them in Honour and Dignity, making them by his Artifices to arise to the highest Degrees of Honour; because then his Adherents did render him the more Service. I doubt not but he has made many come to the Office of a Bishop or other Prelacies, who being consult'd or conven'd together about the Determining of Points relating to our Christianity, may have given Sentiments in favour of the Devil, and prejudicial to the Salvation of Christians. If this were not, Sir, it were impossible that the *Roman Church* should have made Decrees so contrary to those of Jesus Christ, who never required anything of any body, but in Love (c:) For he says (d) *if YOU WOULD be perfect*, or (e) *whosoever WILL fol-*

(a) Eph. 6. 11. 12. (b) Act. 20. 29, 30. 2 Cor. 13. 14, 15. Rev. 2. 3. (c) 2 Cor. 8. 8, 12. (d) Mat. 19. 21. (e) Mat. 16. 24.

low me, let him deny himself, &c. requiring always our *WILL* in all the Vertues that he teaches us ; and God himself from the Beginning of the World unto this present time, gives us no Command but *to love him* : For all things are nothing but Means to attain to this *Love*, even leaving Men free to observe his (f) Commands according to their Free-Will (g) without Constraint ; but those of the Councils, do oblige Persons by force to observe their Decrees : So that they who transgress them, are imprisoned and punished. This is very far from imitating Jesus Christ in his Meekness ; which, he says, we ought (h) *to learn of him who is meek and gentle* ; whereas these use Force and Rigour to make their Commands be observed : For if a true Christian should not go to Mass on the Days which they have appointed, they would commit him to Justice or the Inquisition ; or if another should not communicate at *Easter*, he would be in the same Condemnation. Is not this contrary to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, who demands nothing of any body but what they *WILL* do ; requiring always a free Consent ; drawing no body by Force, but still saying, (i) *be that WILL be my Disciple* ? This rigorous Spirit which is now observ'd in the Church, is not conformable to that of Jesus Christ, whose (k) *Yoke is easie, and his Burthen light* ; whereas those impose troublesome and grievous Commands, yea, even impossible to be observed ; for he who would live as a true Christian, would have no need of confessing once a Year : Nevertheless these make a Command of it.

I must confess, Sir, that by the Grace of God, I do not observe it ; for since I yielded my self wholly unto God, and left the Conversation of Men, I have had no Ground to confess once a Year : Should I be therefore obliged to go and offend God, that I might have Matter to confess at the End of the Year, that I may observe the Ordinances of these Councils ? These are things so far from the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that I know not how some Saints could co-operate to such Resolutions, except by Force, when the greatest Part carries it ; because the most of those Decrees and Commands are more political than divine, and Jesus Christ did not follow these Ways. They ought to come from above.

(f) Ps. 110. 3. (g) Deut. 30. 19. Eccl. 15. 15. (h) Joh. 6. 67.
(i) Mat. 11. 29. (k) Mat. 11. 30.

The Fourth Conference

Of the Reformation of the Church, of its Councils, Commands and Ordinances.

I Said to her ; *That the Councils were held, that they might redress the great Abuses which had crept into the Church ; that it was expedient that the Church gave Commands, or otherwise every one would live after his own Will.*

She said ; Sir, we have the Commandments of God : Had it not been a more perfect way to reform these Abuses, by taking up again only what Jesus Christ had taught us, than to make new Commandments ? What (a) could be wanting in the Doctrine of Jesus Christ that other things must be added to it ? They who would make a good Reformation, ought always to take up again the first Institution, and make it only be observ'd : For the Holy Spirit can never be mistaken. (b) There is nothing to be mended in nor added to any of his Works ; and since we can never change a perfect Form, and give it another without spoiling the first, so we cannot form new Commandments without deforming those of God ; (c) which were compleat and perfect. The great Abuses which had crept into the Church, would have been redress'd better by the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, taking it in the plain Letter, than by so many other new Precepts and Ordinances. No body could have lived any longer after his own Mode, when once the Doctrine of Jesus Christ had been set again in its Light ; for it regulates all our Actions and Manners : There needed nothing to be added to it in order to revive the true Spirit of Christianity with more Ease than all that they would joyn to it since ; which things have been the Cause that many have withdrawn themselves from the Church to forge Heresies according to their Fancies : For they judg'd they were as learn'd as those who would oblige them to their Laws.

(a) *Prov.* 30. 5, 6. (b) *Eccl.* 3. 14. (c) *Pf.* 19. 7.

I said to her ; *I could not comprehend how the Commands of the Church had deformed the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, since they were only added as more express Means to make it be well observ'd.*

She said ; Sir, you do not reach to the Bottom of this Affair : For if you remark it more nearly, you shall find direct Contradictions ; because these Councils would have by force what Jesus Christ would not have but by Love : He never press'd any body to follow his Doctrine : On the contrary, when any of his Disciples left him, he ask'd his Apostles *(d)* if they would leave him also leaving always every one to his own Free-Will ; whereas these damn the Souls and oppress the Bodies of those who will not obey them. They condemn as guilty of mortal Sin all those who will not observe their Commandments, and even imprison their Bodies, banish them from their Country ; yea, for this they sometimes put them to death. *(e)* This Spirit of Rigour, does it not destroy the Form of that sweet Gospel-Law which was so perfectly formed by the greatest Artift that ever was or shall be, that is, by Jesus Christ who was God and Man ? Could there be any thing to be added to the excellent Work of such a Master ? For there can nothing be added more than taken away, without altering the first Form If one take from a Picture the sweet Draughts of some Figure, by adding to it some rude ones, the Figure ceases to be what it was before : For it is impossible that two contrary things should abide together in the same Subject. Could Rigour be introduc'd into the Church to make Meekness be observed there ? These Arguments which you lay down, Sir, are without Foundation ; but you do it to excuse what you have once espoused, (as I have done also) : Notwithstanding, I cannot cover its Deformities so well known to the Eyes of my Saviour, who will very shortly make them known to all the World, tho' they strive so earnestly to cover them.

I said to her ; *I should be very sorry if I should aim to cover what displeased God ; but that it was the common Sentiment of all Christians to own and follow as a good thing, what the Church, assembled in a Body, had ordain'd and determin'd : For we say in our Creed, That we believe in the Holy Catholick Church.*

(d) John 6. 67. *(e)* Matth. 20. 25, 26.

She said ; Sir, you would have reason if you did not take the Bark for the Wood, and a Humane Church for the Divine. The Holy Church cannot err, as I have told you divers times ; because it is the same thing with God. If it be Holy, it is Apostolick : Now the Apostles never commanded the going once a Year to Confession upon Pain of Sin, nor even taught it to any as a Verrue. On the contrary, Jesus Christ said to all those whose Sins he remitted, *(f) Go, and sin no more,* This was far from commanding them to go once a Year to Confession : For this would be tacitly or indirectly to command them to sin once a Year ; because Confession always supposes Sin ; yea, they even teach us that he who receives Absolution without Matter of Sin, commits a Sacrilege, as he does also who gives it. Therefore of Necessity a Man must sin every Year, that he may confess every Year, if he would not commit a Sacrilege. Do you not see, Sir, that the Holy Spirit cannot have instituted such things ? This must come from elsewhere, as many other things ordain'd and resolv'd upon by this Church collegiately assembled, tho' it be in use amongst Christians to refer to it and believe it ? This can be nothing but a blind Submission : For if we had good Eyes, we would still look *(g)* whether what they command or ordain us, be truly good and conformable to the Gospel, before we follow it. They tell us indeed, that Faith ought to be blind, because it consists in believing what we do not see ; But this Faith does not extend so far as to believe what Men say to us, but only what God himself has told us by the Holy Prophets and Apostles, or by Jesus Christ himself, who *(h)* has foretold us a great many things which we do not see, because they are not yet come to pass. In this we must use Faith ; because God cannot lye nor fail in making good his Promises : But our Faith does not stand in that which Men say to us or command us : For they themselves are often fallen from the true Faith while they ordain us things contrary thereunto.

I ask'd her, *If she judg'd the Commandments of the Church to be evil things ?*

She said ; No, Sir, there are divers things which of themselves are good ; as fasting in *Lent*, in imitation of Jesus Christ, who fasted forty Days in the Desert ; and also the communicating at *Easter* in Memory of the Supper which Je-

(f) *Joh. 5. 14. and 8. 11. (g)* *2 Cor. 10. 15. (h)* *Eph. 2. 20.*

Jesus Christ made with his Apostles at that time ; and also the Sanctifying the Days dedicated unto God ; because he himself has commanded it : All these things are good in themselves : But this Constraint under Pain of Damnation, or civil or bodily Punishment, is most evil ; because good Works done with regret, cannot please God, who has no need of our Fasts or Sacrifices ; but he regards our Heart and our Will. If this do not concur to our good Works, *(i)* *he will throw them as Dung into our Faces* : For nothing can please him but what is offered him by Love : Therefore he says in so many Places, *He that WILL come after me, or he that WILL follow me.* In all things he requires our affectionate *Will*, and nothing by Force or Violence. This belongs but to cruel Men, who are not of God, seeing he *(k)* *is ALL LOVE*, and has given us no other Laws but that of Love ; whereas these Persons come with a great many Commandments under Pain of Damnation, and other Temporal Punishments. Have you ever read, Sir, that Jesus Christ, his Apostles or Disciples did at any time imprison any or impose Fines on any for not obeying their Ordinances ; as these Councils do, who deforming this beautiful Law of Meekness and Love, do forge troublesome and constraining ones. Does not God deserve that we sanctifie the Days which are dedicated to him out of Love ? Is not the Desire that we have to follow and imitate Jesus Christ, powerful enough to make us fast the *Lent*, and communicate once a Year, without the being oblig'd to it by force ? He who does it not out of Love must do it with regret, or in Hypocrisie. Were it not better not to be constrain'd to it, than to do things so troublesome without meriting any thing, and to die the Devil's Martyr, which this violent and forcing Command does occasion ? For a true Christian has no need of being forc'd ; and they who are not so, have no need of these Commands.

I said ; *I believ'd that all our good Works to make them meritorious ought to proceed from the Heart and from our Will ; but that God alone can search the Inward ; and therefore the Church ordain'd outward things of which she could judge, and that to keep Christians united together, it was needful to give them Laws and make them be observed.*

She said ; Sir, you grant me by what you say, that the Church at present is not that which Jesus Christ establish-

(i) *Mal. 1. 13, and 2. 3.* *(k)* *1 Joh. 4. 8.*

ed, since to keep Christians united, she makes Laws that are nothing but civil and temporal ones, respecting only outward things ; because that which was established by Jesus Christ, ought not to be upheld, but (l) by the Bond of Charity, uniting Christians by a Conformity of their Wills in God ; which Unity of Spirit appears sufficiently by outward Operations ; because the Christian who is possess'd with Charity cannot remain hid : For Charity is always working. There need no other outward Laws to make appear to Men, whether we be true Christians, but *THE LOVE of GOD, and CHARITY FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR.* These things are as well outward as inward, and may be judg'd by Men : For to discover true Christians it was not needful to ordain them so many Precepts under Pain of mortal Sin : For the Doctrine of the Gospel was but too sufficient to regulate all their Actions and Manners : Why should they command the hearing of Mass under the Pain of mortal Sin, since Jesus Christ in his Gospel, has never oblig'd, nor even counsel'd any body to do it, nor yet to confess their Sins once a Year ? Tho' indeed he says, (m) *confess your Sins one to another* ; this is not that one must do it once a Year ; But when he has sinned he must be humbled and confess to his Brother that he is a Sinner ; and this rather in publick than in private ; that the Humility of declaring our selves Sinners, and the Confusion that we have to be known for such before Men, may give satisfactory Punishment to our Sins. This is not to say that he must go and confess at certain Times and Days ; But when the Sinner desires to return to God in Heart and Affection, even tho' this should not befall but once in his Life, and at the end of it : He should not cease for this to have the Pardon of his Sins, and to obtain Mercy from God : And if to be saved, it were so precisely necessary to communicate at *Easter*, how could a *Paul*, a *Maccarius*, and *Anthony*, and so many other holy Hermites have been saved, who ended their Lives in the Deserts of *Egypt* and *Thebais*, without having ever communicated or heard Mass ? If Jesus Christ had spoken of the Eucharist when he said, (n) *Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, you shall have no Life in you.* This Church which you believe to be holy, would have err'd in holding all these

(l) Col. 3. 14. Job. 13. 34. and 15. 10. (m) Jam. 5. 16. (n) Job. 6. 53.

Persons for Saints, who never communicated, or at least very seldom : For St. Paul the Hermite having been for so many Years in the Desert without seeing any body, died without receiving the Eucharist : The *Egyptian Mary* after having been thirty Years without seeing any body, received it once only before her Death, with a thousand such like. What, could these be saved without observing so much as one of these Commands of the Church ? For they sanctified all the Days of their Life by a continual Union with God, as all true Christians ought to do. It was not needful for them to pitch upon certain Days appointed by the Church, all their Days (none excepted) being sanctified by continual Prayer. In like manner they could not observe the Fasts of *Lent*, and the other times expressly appointed : For their Life was nothing but a continual Fast, taking no other Food but what was purely necessary, as all true Christians ought to do, who expect to be satisfied in the other World, without desiring to satiate themselves in this. Why should they who have studied to defend this Church, say, that People cannot marry in *Lent* or *Advent* ? Neither Jesus Christ nor his Apostles ever forbad such things, neither did they command the Paying of Tithes : For that great Apostle St. Paul says, that (o) *his Hands gain'd his Bread, and that he was chargeable to nobody* : And Jesus Christ bids his Disciples, tho' (p) *The Workman be worthy of his Reward : take and eat whatsoever is given them ; and when they enter into a Place and are not received, that they go from it shaking the Dust off their Feet ;* whereas those Councils ordain the Payment of Tithes by Force : So that he who is wanting in it, should be treated as a Criminal. I do not know, Sir, how you can say, that all these Laws, with so obliging them were needful to keep Christians united, by many others, to observe them by Force ! Because I can see nothing in all these Ordinances which has the Property of uniting Hearts On the contrary, rather of dividing them,

I said to her ; *That in all well order'd Common-wealths, there must always be heads and Superiours, whom we ought to obey, and follow their Laws ; or otherwise there could be no Order.*

She said ; Sir, if you hold the Church for a Civil Common-wealth, you have Reason ; but if you hold her to be Holy and Spiritual, or the Spouse of Jesus Christ, you are (q) much in the wrong : For her Head was still her Superiour, and has

given her such excellent Laws and Rules, that no body can add any thing more perfect to them : Those who would needs make some Changes in them, have wholly confounded them ; and they who would be their Superiours, have abused the Graces of their Liege Lord : Since being appointed his Lieutenants on Earth, to maintain his Ordinances, they have neglected them, and have made others after their own Mode, or for their own Advantage, against the Designs of their Sovereign Master : For by forbidding to marry at certain times, they disturb the Order that God has set from the beginning of the World. Nothing was more holy, nor ever will be, amongst Men in this World, than *Adam* before his Sin. Nevertheless God gave him a Wife, that he might know her for the Generation of Men, and for the perpetual Unity that they ought to have together. If God found it meet that this Marriage should be instituted in the Earthly Paradise in the most holy time that ever was, before *Adam* had sinn'd, why do these Persons forbid to marry in the times of *Lent* and *Advent* ? If it were for the Piety of the Time, they would not give so many Dispensations to do it after they have forbidden it : For ordinarily we see more of the Rich married in this forbidden Time, than in that which is allow'd. It seems this Prohibition is but for the Poor, who have not Money enough to obtain these Dispensations. It is a Pain to me to bend my Mind under these Laws : For I find them not at all conformable to those of God : And if we must leave the doing good things because Men forbid them, they are then greater Masters than he.

I said to her ; *I did not believe that the Church can forbid good things, or command evil things.*

She said ; Sir, consider narrowly this Prohibition of marrying at a certain time ; it cannot at all be good in it self : For they themselves call Marriage a Sacrament, and they say well ; for all the Works of God are sacred and holy : If therefore it be a sacred thing, why may it not be received in the times of *Lent* or *Advent*, which they reckon also to be holy times ? May not holy things be done in holy times ? This ought to be the fittest time for receiving the Sacraments ; and Marriage is certainly instituted of God from the Beginning of the World, and he did nothing more perfect in Nature than the Institution of Marriage, as he did nothing more perfect in Grace than the Free-Will which he gave to Man ; and those who call themselves the *Church*, would indeed by their Ordinances hinder both the one and the other, bounding
and

and limiting the Will of Man to their Submissions, and interdicting them Marriage at certain times limited by them. Jesus Christ (r) went in Person to a Marriage with his Mother, and his Disciples: that he might authorize it by his Presence: Why then should these forbid it for the Piety of the times of *Lent* and *Advent*? as if Marriage was evil and unworthy to be celebrated in pious times! while Marriage has even more of Piety and Sanctity, than this *Lent* and *Advent*, which are not authorizd but by the Commandment of Men, and Marriage by the Ordinance of God himself, and confirm'd by Jesus Christ himself, being at a Marriage in *Cana of Galilee*, where he did the first Miracle, turning Water into Wine for a Blessing to the Married.

I said to her; *That Marriage was truly instituted of God, and consequently good in it self; but that the Customs of Men had render'd it evil and insolent, by Excess of Feasts and Luxuries; and that for this Cause it was forbidden in holy times.*

She said; If Marriage is become evil thro' the ill Customs of Men, the Church ought not to permit an evil thing at any other times, no more than in Lent and Advent: For it is not lawful to do evil things at any time; and if they will forbid good things for the ill Use of them, they must forbid the Use of all the Sacraments; because in general they are all abused: And instead of forbidding all by the same Consequence that they interdict Marriage, they incite Christians to use them more, and even in the most holy times: For if they send them some Jubilee, or some other Indulgence, it is always on condition that he who would obtain them do confess and communicate. In the mean time, no body can be ignorant of the great Abuse and ill Use that is made of the receiving these two Sacraments, which are almost never received but they commit Sacrilege, we see by Experience that Sorcerers do nothing more willingly, than go to Confession and Communion. Baptism, as I told you also heretofore, is greatly abused in the receiving of it, since, we see, no body lives according to the Promise made at Baptism. Nevertheless, the Church is so earnest to make all Christians receive it, that they will not wait till they have the Use of Reason to know what they do. If this ill Use has given Occasion to interdict the Sacrament of Marriage at certain times,

(r) Job. 2. 1.

wherefore do they not likewise interdict this of Baptism until the Child have attain'd the Use of Reason, that he may use it aright? *Confirmation* was a very good thing, that the Child baptized at its Birth might confirm the Promises which the Godfathers and Godmothers made in its Name: But they are also so eager to confirm Children, that sometimes they will not wait till they be out of their Swadling-Clothes: So that they do no more observe the Promise of Confirmation than that of Baptism; because it is usual never to think any longer on what they have done, when they received these two Sacraments in such Non-Age: They content themselves with receiving the outward Signs, without caring any farther, either for Faith or for the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. Are not these great Abuses and very ill Uses of them? Yet they interdict no body, no not for a Day: On the contrary, they prefs and draw all Christians to them with Precipitation, without caring for the Abuses which are committed in them: So is it likewise, as to the Sacrament of *Orders*. How many Priests are there who abuse this Dignity? How many are there of them who lead a debauch'd Life? How many Vagabonds and Sluggards? As soon as they are made Priests, instead of employing their time in the Study of a truly Christian Life, they amuse themselves with Plays and Pastimes, and worldly and vain Recreations. Notwithstanding of all these Abuses, they interdict no body to become a Priest, provided they have studied sufficiently: On the contrary, they consecrate them profusely, and in an excessive Number: And whereas Jesus Christ said to his Disciples, that *(s)* they should not be many Masters. The Church makes so many of them, that one cannot tell which of them to hear or obey; because of such a Diversity of them, and yet she commands to pay them Tithes, under Pain of Sin.

Judge you, Sir, whether all these things are ordained, forbidden, or commanded by the Holy Spirit, who is the Righteous, Good, and True God, always constant and unchangeable.

I said to her; That Jesus Christ himself said, that the Workman is worthy of his Reward, and that the Church might very well ordain the Paying Tithes to the Priests, who being continually occupied in the Service of God, the Instruction of the People, and the Administration of the Sacraments, could not gain their own Living.

She said; Sir, if none pretended to the Tithes but they who are in the Office of a Pastour, or continually employed in the Service of God, there would be no need to make People pay them: For all good Christians would be well pleas'd to maintain their spiritual Fathers, even tho' it were never enjoyn'd them: But this Command extends much farther; for the Tithes must be paid to maintain those Priests who have no other Charge but their own Persons, and desire to rule like secular Princes, employing the Wealth of their Tithes in Coaches, Horses, Trains, Rich Moveables and Sumptuous Buildings. This is so much the Fashion that now-a-days there is scarce any body to be seen that will be content with what is necessary; but they will have all in excess and abundance, even they who manage their Wealth, as to their own Persons, heap it up to enrich their Kinsfolk. Are these Goods employed aright in the Service of God? On the contrary, they are spent rather in the Devil's Service, who is still glorified by the Pride and Avarice which those Persons commit in the Abuse of their Privilege; Because those Goods which are dedicated to the Service of God, whether Tithes or other, are not proper to the Priests who possess them. but to poor Christian Brethren: and they cannot take of them for their own Use beyond what is justly necessary, even tho' they be Pastors, or have Charges: This cannot warrant them to distribute or heap up this Wealth of the Church, except for the Entertainment of their poor Christian Brethren, after the Example of the Apostles; who distributed to every one according to their Necessities: So that no body had need of any thing, even tho' they did not oblige them to give them Goods by Force: For when *Ananias* and *Saphira* brought a Part of their Wealth to *St. Peter* when they came to be Christians, he said to them, (t) your Wealth was your own, and you might have kept it; Wherefore have you lyed to the Holy Ghost? To shew that they constrain'd no Body to give their Goods, leaving every one free to do it who would; whereas they constrain Men by Force to give their Goods to the Priests, and damn them if they do it not; as if they, by their own Authority could damn them; which they cannot do: For Jesus Christ has said, (u) *Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.* For my part, I think, if People did not give so many Tithes, they

(t) *Act.* 2. 48. 4. 25. (u) *Act.* 4. 4. (x) *Mat.* 7. 1.

would not co-operate to so many Sins, and that temporal Wealth has been the Cause of the Church's Ruine, and that the Holy Ghost has been entirely banish'd from her: For since she would needs maintain her self by Wealth, Honour, and Authority, the Holy Spirit has been banish'd from her, and she governed by a purely Humane and Political Spirit; or, to speak truly, a Diabolical one: Because a Spirit simply Humane, could not ordain things contrary to Jesus Christ: For Humane Wickedness does not extend farther (x) than the Pleasure, Honour, or Profit of Man; but these ordain things wherein they have neither the one nor the other of these Advantages, as to cause, baptize, and confirm Children in their Infancy, and to fast on Pain of mortal Sin.

(x) 1 John 2. 15.

The Fifth Conference.

That all Men ought to labour to satisfy the Justice of God, by this Penitence.

I said; That it was at least needful, that some Tithes or Goods should be appointed for those who were necessary for the Service of God and of Christian People; because they were forbidden to trade, or work to get their Bread.

She said; Sir, this forbidding the Priests to work that they may get their Bread cannot come from God,; because he commanded all Men in Adam (a) to gain their Bread with the Sweat of their Body. Why then should the Priests be exempted, who ought to obey him more precisely than others; because they make a particular Profession of it, and they ought more punctually to be subject to the Commandments of God, who having appointed bodily Labour for Penitence, did not exempt the Priests, nor his Apostles, nor Joseph, nor Mary, nor (b) even Jesus Christ himself, who labour'd for his bodily Food. How can they change so general an Ordinance, confirmed by

(a) Gen. 3. 19. (b) Mark 6. 3.

so many Saints, and by Jesus Christ himself? If Labour were evil, God would not have appointed it; for he cannot do evil things; and if it were not good and saving, the Saints and the Apostles would not have exercised it, and Jesus Christ would not have confirm'd it by working himself with his Mother and his Father. By what Spirit could they forbid the Priests to work, when we hear St. Paul say, (c) *Lo, these Hands gain'd my Bread, not being willing to be chargeable to any.* What greater Dignity would the Priests pretend to now-a-days, than the Apostles had, and Jesus Christ himself, that they should be interdicted and forbid Working; Do we not plainly see, that these are but the Inventions and Commandments of Men for their Ease and Commodity? For God never changes his Laws, and can never find that to be evil which he has once found to be good. If Labour be good, wherefore should it be forbidden the Priests, who ought to be more good and perfect than others? And if Labour were not good, yea, necessary for Man, God would never have ordain'd it as a Satisfaction for his Sins.

I said to her; *That Labour was forbidden the Priests that thereby more time might be given them for attending on their Studies, and the Perfection of Souls, for fear temporal Labours and Business should deprive them of the Leisure to attend upon what is for the Glory of God.*

She said; Sir, these Ends have not their Effect: For tho' the Priests use no bodily Labour, yet notwithstanding they do not apply themselves to labour for the Glory of God, but rather to offend him by their Sloth and Idleness; which is the Cassion whereon the Devil rests. The ceasing to labour, defiles them with a double Sin: For notwithstanding of this, they do not give themselves to the Study of Perfection: On the contrary, they give way to Temptation, and give the Devil Leisure to tempt them at his Pleasure: For wherever he meets with Idleness, there (d) he enters as into his own House. It were better to command the Priests to labour much, that the Devil might get no hold on their Souls; because being disoccupied from all the Business and Affairs of the World, they are the better disposed to hearken to the evil Thoughts and Suggestions of the Devil: Whereas a Soul that is continually employed, takes no Leisure to give Ear to the Devil. Do we not see so great a Number of Priests, Monks,

(c) *Act.* 20. 34, 35. 1 *Thes.* 2. 9. (d) *Eccle.* 33. 31.

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and Religious, pass their Time without doing any thing, and live in Sloth upon the Sweat of the People? They will not be ashamed to go beg their Bread at the Houses of poor Labourers and Tradesmen; who have no other thing but what they can gain by the Sweat of their Face, who sometimes give them what they've need of themselves: Nevertheless they dare not refuse them, because they are Church-men: But if they were of the true Church, built by Jesus Christ, (e) they would be so filled with Charity, that instead of asking or receiving Alms of these poor Workmen, they would work themselves to give them the Gain of their Labour. Sir, I look upon what is received by Form of Alms as a Robbery, when we may get our own Bread by our Trade or Labour, or we may have whereupon to live of our own Goods; and I believe 'tis thus (f) before God: For it is an unjust thing to live on anothers Goods, and to keep our own; or to go beg, when God has given us an healthful Body and sound Mind that we may labour. But you will still excuse that Church which you have for so long a time look'd upon as holy. It were better to open your Eyes to discover the Reality of its Wickedness, that you let not your self be deceiv'd to your Perdition.

(e) Acts 20. 35. (f) Eccl. 40. 31, 34.

The Sixth Conference.

That the Roman Church is the Spouse of Jesus Christ; but that she has falsified her Faith to her lawynul Husband.

I said to her; *That she gave a deal of Light in divers things for which I did infinitely bless God; but I could not deny, it troubled me a little to hear that the Roman Church was thus fallen from the Spirit of true Christianity.*

She said; Sir, it is more expedient for the Salvation of your Soul, that you know the Misery into which the Church has fallen, than if you knew the highest Mysteries of the Tri-

nity, or the greatest Good of all Men together; Because an Evil Known, is easie to be avoided. But as long as 'tis unknown and hid from us, it is always dangerous, and may greatly hurt us, without our being aware of it. Therefore you ought to give the more Attention, and to apply your Understanding more to understand and comprehend the Truth, which I tell you of Evil, than to discover the Good: For if I told you the Good of all Men, this would only give you some little Contentment, or sensual Satisfaction, which would add nothing to your Soul: But by knowing the Evil as it is, you may prudently beware of it, that it do not touch or harm you: For all these Evils which I said were introduc'd into the Church, even while it was yet Holy, are all covered with Appearances of Good and Piety, and Reason; because the Devil could never have gained so many Souls as have followed him, but under this Colour or Mantle of Good: And he will yet gain many by their Ignorance of these Evils, or by their Unbelief of them: For as long as they take Evil for Good, they will still blindly follow it; and Ignorance will not excuse the Sin: For God having given us an Understanding to comprehend, and a Spirit to discern, ^(a) we ought particularly to apply them to what concerns our Salvation; and when the Truth is set before our Eyes, and we will not open them to consider it; we resist it, and may look for the Condemnation of the Holy Spirit; who says, that ^(b) *Unbelievers shall have their Portion with Sorcerers.*

I said to her; I would not be incredulous, but believe the Truth: But that I felt an inward Opposition when it thus overturn'd the Church in the chief Points of Belief, which we owe to it in case it were the Holy Church.

She said; Sir, I believe in the Holy Church; and if I had a thousand Lives, I would voluntarily expose them for its Defence, and would think my self happy to spend the last Drop of my Blood for such a Cause: But when God makes me see clearly that She is not Holy, nor that which Jesus Christ established; but that She is the Whore ^(c) which is spoken of in the Revelation. I cannot resist so clear Truths, which do not only lie secret in my Soul, but God gives me also Terms and Words whereby to explain them to you, that you may likewise receive the Knowledge of them for your Salvation: For which I have often bless'd God, who bestows on

^(a) Eph. 5. 15, 17. Phil. 1. 9, 10. ^(b) Rev. 21. 8. ^(c) Rev. 17. 1.

us so many particular Favours, hoping he will do it also to others, But I intreat you, doubt not what I tell you of the Miseries into which Men are fallen : For they are yet greater than I have told you : But persuade your self assuredly, if they were not true, I would not have engag'd my self in Discourses so melancholly and disagreeable to your Sentiments. It would be more pleasant to me to tell you, that the *Roman* Church is Holy and Perfect ; and that those who obey and follow her, are holy. This would recreate both my Heart and yours, and the Hearts of all who could hear it. I should be very light-headed, or void of Understanding, to please my self with things which displease all the World, and which oblige me still to hold my Peace, and to conceal my self. Because I know very well, if they should hear me declare those Truths, all the *Romanists* would rise up against me, and even the most Pious ^(d) would think they made a Sacrifice to God in killing me : For they are ignorant of these Truths, and are wedded to their Church, as if she were Holy ; knowing no better ; because the great Darkness that is now throughout the whole World, wherein the Devil has bewitch'd all Minds with Errours, ^(e) they may never come to the Knowledge of the Truth, which every one withstands, even thinking they do well in it.

I ask'd her, *If I might not suspend my Belief of those things which were contrary to the Church, and believe only what concern'd Vertue and the Love of God ?*

She said ; Sir, you can never follow Good without departing from Evil ; nor adhere perfectly to God without abandoning that which is contrary to him. Have you not remark'd in how many things this *Roman* Church is contrary to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ ? How therefore can you adhere to her, and follow Vertue and the Love of God, so long as they are really contrary ? Jesus Christ says, that ^(f) *We cannot serve two Masters, without being unfaithful to the one or the other.* You must chuse which you love best. Good can never profit you without the Knowledge of Evil ; because while you do not know and believe it, you will insensibly fall into it ; yea, you will often take Evil for Good : For the Evil of this Church is still covered with the Sanctity of pious Reasons and Arguments : And if Antichrist did not cover his Wickedness with Vertue, he could gain none but the Wick-

(d) *Job.* 16. 2. (e) *2 Thef.* 2. 10, 11. (f) *Mat.* 6. 24.

ed; but with pious Pretex^ts, he gains all the Good, who would even make a Scruple not to follow him, as you do, Sir, by your Demand : For if you do believe, and follow Vertue and the Love of God, you will certainly hate all that is contrary thereunto. I think I have already told you enough to let you see that the Rules, the Commands, and Ordinances of this Church are not conformable to those of God ; who, when he created Man, gave him full Liberty to use his Will ; whereas those constrain it in all Points, and will not only subject it by Councils or Advices ; but by Force and Violence both bodily and spiritual : So that as much as in them lies they destroy the Law and the Ordinances of God, to establish their own Authority, and to bind the Souls of Christians by so many Constraints, that 'tis impossible for them to satisfy them without displeasing God, tho' there were no other thing but the forbidding Priests to labour, and making them swear never to explain the Holy Scriptures otherwise than the ancient Fathers have done.

Do you not see, Sir, that all their Laws are nothing but political, and made to maintain their State and Authority ? If a Prince or a King, to whom you were subject, did become a Tyrant ; would you make any Scruple to abandon him when it were in your Power to do it, tho' he were the lawful Son of your King and gracious Father who had preceded him ? A Man must be his own Enemy, or of an effeminate Heart, if he have not the Courage to leave his own Country, that he may avoid his Tyranny and Severity, and live in Repose and Tranquillity.

I said to her : *That this Comparison was not suitable, and that I had not found the Roman Church Tyrannical.*

She said ; Sir, that is because you have always submitted to her Laws, without considering whether they were good or evil ; and the good Impression they cunningly gave you of her Merits, made her Burthens, tho' very weighty, seem light to you. If you have done it in Innocence, God will pardon you, because you perceived no other thing at that time : But at present when God sends you his Divine Light that you may discover the Dangers in which you have walk'd amidst your Darkness, do not resist it by Doubts or Scruples, which the Devil will put into your Mind, which have no other Foundation but a Pusillanimity and Softness of Heart ; which more regards Natural Sensibility, than the Perfection of the Soul, to which if you would attain, you must hear what (g) God teaches

(g) 2 Tim. 3. 17.

and

and commands you without amusing your self with so many other different things which Men propose to you, who are not to be trusted: But God can never deceive you, no more than he can suffer any Mutation or Change. He is our lawful King, who has always governed us by Fatherly Affection and Love: And even when Men had offended him thro' Excess of Wickedness, he sent them (b) his Word cloathed with our Humane Nature, that he might bring us to acknowledge our Fault, that we may return to him by (i) Love and not by Force: For the whole Doctrine of Jesus Christ is filled with the Light of Counsels and Admonitions, (k) not with forc'd Commands or violent Drawings; but gentle and willing, making no Change to the first Law of God, but only an Explanation and Illustration of it: For Jesus Christ gives us no new Commandment by his Gospel (l) but enlarged the Means by which we may the better observe the first Commandment of God, declaring to us what we ought to do and to avoid for this End: But this Church which succeeded him has indeed chang'd the Government: For instead of preserving the Spirit of a most gentle Father, she has taken that of a real Tyrant and wicked one.

I ask'd her; *If she held the Roman Church to be that which succeeded Jesus Christ and his Apostles?*

She said; Yes, Sir, the *Roman Church* was in her Beginning the true Spouse of Jesus Christ, who had received all the Riches of the Gospel, the true Word of God, and the Wisdom of the Holy Ghost: But since she left that, she has fallen into the Misery into which *Adam* fell, when he would quit his Dependance on God, and become his Enemy, that he might depend on none but himself. *Adam* was the same Person after his Sin that he was before it; but he was not cloathed with the same Graces, nor with the same Spirit: For he was ashamed and confounded, subject to all sorts of Miseries, bodily and spiritual, ignorant, inconstant, and malicious, with all the other Miseries under which we now groan. Even so is it of the *Roman Church* which was established with all the Graces of the Holy Spirit; but since she would needs depend upon her self and establish her own Au-

(b) Prov. 1. 20. &c. (i) Ps. 110. 3. (k) 2 Cor. 5. 20. 6. 1. Acts 20. 31. Eph. 4. 1. 2 Thes. 2. 7. Phil. 9. 10. 20. 1 Per. 3. 1. 3. 2 Joh. 5. (l) Mat. 5. 17. Rom. 3. 3. Gal. 2. 18. (m) 1 Joh. 2. 7, 8.

thority ; she (*n*) has lost the Grace of God, with all the (*o*) spiritual Gifts with which she was adorned, and has consented to the (*p*) Suggestions of the Devil, as *Adam* did ; and has ever since (*q*) been estranged from God, and encreased in (*r*) Wickedness, as *Man* did after Sin. Tho' he was the same by Nature, he was not the same by Grace : For by his Free-Will, he had denuded himself thereof, and cloathed himself with Wickedness. The same has befallen the *Roman Church*. Since she (*s*) changed the Order in which God had set her, and would needs (*t*) give Orders and Præcepts to her self, after her own Way, and according to her own Inclinations, she is fallen from the Grace of God, and sunk into all sort of Miseries : Tho' *Jesus Christ* had chosen her for his true Spouse, she has falsified her Faith, and the Fidelity she ow'd to her lawful Bridegroom (*u*) to go joyn her self to the Kings of the Earth, whereas *Jesus Christ* has had so carefully warned her (*x*) *That his Kingdom was not of this World* ; yet she would needs reign here, and rule over all Earthly Powers ; whereas her dear Husband would only suffer and be despised. Thus she has withdrawn from him to her Loss, to commit Adultery with the Honours, Grandeurs and Riches of the World ; and therefore has deserved to be called *THE GREAT WHORE* in the *Revelation*.

I said to her ; *That Jesus Christ had promised to his Church that he would never leave her : asking how this could be, that she was now abandon'd to so sad a State ?*

She said ; Sir, *Jesus Christ* will never be wanting in his Promise, and has never left his Church, no more than a Man ceases to be espoused to a Wife, tho' she falsifie her Faith to him : She continues always his Wife ; but he may, both by Divine and Humane Right, repudiate her ; and with just Reason, when she will needs continue in her Whoredoms, he ought in good Conscience to reject her, and thrust her away as unworthy of his Company. Even so God cannot abandon his true Church : He (*y*) will still uphold her, tho' she were but in one Soul only. She shall never perish : For she shall be always united to the Spirit of her Husband, who is

(*n*) *Rom.* 11. 20, 21, 22. (*o*) *Hof.* 2. 9. (*p*) 2 *Cor.* 11. 3. (*q*) *Ezek.* 16. 15. (*r*) *Rev.* 18. 3. (*s*) *Jer.* 6. 16, — 19. *John* 15. 6. (*t*) *Isa.* 66. 3, 4. (*u*) *Rev.* 17. 2. (*x*) *John* 18. 36. (*y*) *Mat.* 28. 20.

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God Immortal and Unchangeable, who cannot change nor forsake any thing ; but (z) when those Men who represent the Church, do falsifie their Faith to him, and will needs take their Pleasure in worldly Riches, Grandeurs and Honours ; they withdraw from and forsake their lawful Husband for this Earthly Trash ; and instead of continuing the faithful heavenly Spouse, they become Harlots, by cleaving to earthly Honours and Pleasures. By which you may see, Sir, that Jesus Christ has not left his Church, but has only repudiated the Harlots, whom he has discovered in it, who are not such by Faults or Falls that are casual, of which she repents, or (a) desires to amend ; but by so long inveterate Habits, that she will never change from them but by Death : (b) Therefore there is nothing to be looked for but the Destruction of that *BABYLON*, and the Fall of that *GREAT WHORE*, who is spoken of in the *Revelation* : For she will never leave her Whoredoms ; but by a total Fall and Ruine which shall be irrecoverable.

I ask'd her ; *How it came that God had not preserved his Church in the same Place where he had established her, tho' it were but in one Person only ? That this would be a great Happiness to find it in the Colledge of Rome.*

She said ; Sir, God hath (c) no Respect of Persons, and has no fix'd Place, being universally in all things. Even so is it of his Church which is united to him ; she has no fix'd Place : Therefore she is call'd *Catholic*, or common and universal : For she is to be found in all Places indifferently : For otherwise, none should have the Liberty to be of the Church, but they who remain'd in this fix'd Place. No, Sir, this cannot be so ; because God has given *Liberty* to all Men in the World, without having limited them to any particular Nation or Country, but to all in general. The Church consequently may be as well among the *Jews*, *Turks* and *Heathens*, as among the Church of *Rome* : For she does not consist but of Souls who possess the Law of God (d) or the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, which is all the same thing ; because this Doctrine is no other thing but the Explication of the proper Means for observing aright this Law : So that he who among the *Heathens* should live in an entire Dependance upon God, having his Will conformable to him in all things : Such a

(z) 2 Tim. 2. 12, 13. (a) Rev. 2. 21. (b) Rev. 17. and 18. (c) Acts 10. 34. (d) John 8. 31.

Person would be the Church, even tho' he knew no other Precept or Doctrine: Because all that is written in the Law of *Moses*, and even in the Gospel, are no other thing but Means to attain to this Dependance upon and Conformity to the Will of God: So that he who is in this, needs no other Command or Precept to be assured of Eternal Bliss; because all is comprehended and contain'd in this (e) Dependance upon God. All other things are but for enlarging and explaining, wherein this Dependance on God consists. Therefore the Gospel says (f) *deny your selves*; to make us understand that as long as we live to our selves, we are not resigned to God: For if we rejoyce in Prosperity, and are grieved in Adversity, it is a Sign that we are not yet resigned to God, but that we live to our own Desires and Wills, not to those of God, who will never permit any thing to befall us but what is good and wholesome. But when we live to our selves, we will have this and that, according to our own Judgments, which are blind as to Eternal Things. For this Cause Jesus Christ has taken the Pains to teach us so many divers things, that he may make us know what hinders us from coming to this Dependance on God, and also what makes it easie to us: But if we find this Dependance without these Means, we have fulfilled the whole Law, and are the Church.

I said to her; *That we hold in the Roman Church that out of it there is no Salvation.*

She replied; And I doubt, Sir, if one can be saved in it, since she is not governed by the Spirit of God, how can she guide any to Salvation? If the Devil sit in her Throne, is it to be believed that he will save us? His Malice encreases as his Authority augments. I cannot believe that one truly Christian wholly resigned to the Will of God, can remain in the College of *Rome*: For they would not suffer a Spirit so contrary to that which rules them. These Reproofs would be insupportable to them. God himself could not preserve his Church among them, tho' it were but in one Person only. They would certainly destroy it, and that without Delay. If they teach that none can be saved out of their Dependance, it is because they would gain rule over the World, and be as great as God; as the Devil had this Ambition since his Creation, and retained it hitherto with a great

(e) *Pov.* 3, 5, 6. (f) *Matth.* 16, 24.

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deal of Success; because he holds at present almost all Men under his Authority: For to say that there is no Salvation out of the Dominion of *Rome*, is to contradict the Gospel. For the Apostle having told Jesus Christ that some taught the Gospel, who notwithstanding, did not follow Jesus Christ nor his Disciples, he says to them, (g) *Let them alone; for they who are not against us, are with us.* Should the Pope be a greater Judge to condemn those who observ'd the Law of God, because they did not depend on him? This could not be true, even tho' the *Roman Church* were as yet guided by the Holy Spirit: She could not notwithstanding, make void the Salvation of those who did not follow her; since Jesus Christ has not done it in his Gospel; which is their Rule, and that which they ought to follow. The Apostles never condemned *John's* Disciples, who followed not them, and did otherwise than theirs. There was a Complaint indeed that they fasted not as *St. John's* Disciples did; (h) and Jesus Christ excuses them. Each Apostle had his Disciples apart; and all the Churches were also separate. That of *Peter* was not the Church of *Paul*, or of the other Apostles: Every one had his Church and his Disciple separately; and none of them said that those who did not follow them were damned. It sufficed that all had the Gospel for their Rule, without making any Difference, whether one was of *James* or of *Philip*: *S. Paul* even severely (i) reproves those who said, *I am of Paul or of Apollos*, asking them, *If they were not all of Christ who died for them?* But at present, they will have none to be saved but those who are under one Man only; whereas then all were saved who were under Jesus Christ. Have we gotten another God, or rather another Law since the Doctrine of Jesus Christ? that these Men will needs damn all those who will not follow this Pope! For my Part, I would rather upon Pain of my own Damnation, assure all those of Salvation who shall observe the Commandments of God in whatsoever Place and Condition they may be: For Jesus Christ said to the young Man in the Gospel (k) who ask'd him *What he should do to be saved?* *Keep the Commandments*, without any other thing; because all is comprehended in this. A Man must not go by four Ways when he knows one that is streight and sure. What ever Men would make us to believe, the Truth that is of God, is always the most certain.

(g) *Luke* 9. 50. (h) *Mat.* 9. 14, 15. (i) *1 Cor.* 1. 12. 13. (k) *Mat.* 19. 16, 17.

I begg'd, She would explain to me how God could not preserve his Church in the College of Rome, even tho' it were but one Person only, seeing he is Almighty.

She said; Sir, the Almighty Power of God will never extend it self beyond his Righteousness and his Goodness. He has given to Man a Free-Will to use it at his Pleasure, by which he has made him partake in the Deity; which is the greatest good he could ever do to Man: For by this Free-Will he renders him capable of taking his Delights with him; or otherwise there would not have been any Correspondence of God with Man, since Likeness begets Love, and Love is always bent to love its like. If Man had not had Liberty of using his Will, he would not have been like to God in any thing: For a Creature bounded and constrain'd, has no relation to an Almighty God. It was necessary that the Power of using his Free-Will, should be given him that God might take his Delight with that which in some manner was like unto himself, and nothing could resemble him but this free Power of his Will. Tho' he had created Man's Soul divine, this had been but a limited Spirit without this Free-Will which must certainly concur to compleat the Delight which God would take with Men: For as a King can take no Contentment in recreating himself with a Slave, as he would do with a Queen, who is nearer his Quality; so God would make Man in his full Liberty, and capable of using his Free-Will fully, that in this Liberty he might be some way like to him. This being done, (m) he cannot repent of any thing, but lets Man enjoy his Gifts: However he abuse them, his Righteousness and Constancy will not let him withdraw or take from him what he has once given him; but he leaves it him, and will leave it to all Eternity: Whether Man save or damn himself, Free-Will shall never be taken from him; for God is not changeable in his Gifts, no more than in all his Works. This being so, (n) he cannot hinder the *Romanists* from killing any body amongst them who would be the true Church, without bounding or limiting the Free-Will that they have to do this: But his Goodness preventing their Malice, will move his Church (o) to withdraw out of their Power, or to hide her self, as Jesus Christ hid himself to avoid the *Jews* Tyranny; and by this means he exercises his Good-

(m) Rom. 11. 29. (n) Rev. 12. 6, 14. 18, 4. (o) John 12. 39.

nels towards his Church, and leaves those Men of ill Will in the Liberty that he has given them, who do only the Mischiefs that are in their Power, and cannot reach the doing those which the Good by their Light and Foresight can avoid. 'Tis thus, Sir, that I said, God could not preserve his Church among these *Romanists*, because he will never use his Power against the Justice of the Right that he has given them to use their Free-Will. Sir, we ought always to take things in their Source, or else we would utter Calumnies against God, either in saying that he is not Powerful to hinder Evil, nor Almighty to preserve his own, or not just in not letting Causes work according to the Order in which he has established them, which would be so many Blasphemies: Because God can never do any Evil, for he is the Source of all Good: He cannot permit Injustice, for he is perfect Righteousness: And likewise he cannot against Promise, take from him the Free-Will that he has once given him: But he does all his Works in such Perfection, that (q) Goodness, Righteousness, Faith, and Truth concur in all, in an excellent Harmony, which ravishes the Understanding of him who considers them.

I said to her; *That the Impression of Dependance on this Roman Church, was as it were naturalized in my Soul, and that it would be very ill in me to leave her altogether, tho' I absolutely desired to resign my self entirely unto God.*

She said; Sir, be not any ways troubled. Continue confidently under the *Roman Church*, provided you do not follow in her, but that which is good in it self; abundance cannot hurt. After you shall be entirely resigned unto God, he will uphold you, and will govern you thro' all: The more you shall be united to him, the more you will partake of his Virtues; and his Light shall be given you more clearly, to discover the Truth of every thing. You are now yet a Courtier of this *Roman Church*: Therefore you love her and would feign excuse her Faults, that you may not be obliged to forsake her; which likewise you ought not to do by the Inducement of any; but if you approach to God you will partake of this Light as the Ray partakes of the Sun, according as it is near it. When you shall partake of the Righteousness of God, you will see with an upright Eye the Injustice of this *Roman Church*; and when you shall partake of the Truth of God, you will discover their Lyes; and having partaken of

the Goodness of God, you will discover that Malice which now you can scarce believe : For all the Perfections of God do assuredly discover the Imperfections which are opposite to him. Labour therefore, Sir, to find this Union with God, and be not troubled under whose Dependance you are. *Rome* cannot hurt you, when you hearken to none but God. We need not be at the Trouble to learn where the true Church is: For she will be in us as long as we possess the Law of God and the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, which only makes up the holy Church. It remains only that in the *Roman Church* you beware of the Seductions which are crept in there. This is what Jesus Christ has so often warn'd us of in his Gospel, saying, (r) *Beware of false Prophets, who will come deceitfully, and shall seduce many. False Christs and false Prophets shall arise, who shall, if it were possible, deceive the very Elect.* He neither speaks of *Turks* nor of *Heathens*, but of false Christs.

(r) *Mat. 7. 15. 24. 5. 11. 24.*

The Seventh Conference.

Of the Mass, and of the Sacraments and Ecclesiastical Functions.

I ask'd her ; *How I should behave in the Administration of the Sacraments in the Mass, and other Functions of my Charge ?*

She said ; Sir, Do all this in the Spirit that God requires you to do it in ; because there are great Abuses in this : For all these things are not what they made us believe of them. Many Superstitions have crept into them, against God's Honour and our Salvation : Therefore you must always join your Intention with what (a) God may have in these things, or otherwise you will commit many Faults, and will likewise deceive others. For my part, I believe the Mass represents the Communion that Jesus Christ had with his Apostles, who eat and drank with them every Day, blessing the Bread and breaking it to distribute them ; which the Apostles

(a) *Phil. 2. 5.*

(b) con-

(b) continued to do with their Disciples, and afterwards all the Primitive Christians, who assembled every Day to eat together, and blessing God, imparted to every one as he had need; which maintain'd and nourish'd among them the true CHARITY which Jesus Christ had left them by Testament; (c) *Do this in Remembrance of me, and you shall live for ever*; because without this Charity no body can be saved; as St. Paul assures us; (d) *Tho' one could even remove Mountains, tho' he gave all his Goods to the Poor, yea, his Body to be burn'd, &c. all this would be nothing without Charity*; which Jesus Christ had recommended to all his Disciples a little before his Death. This is now out of use, and instead of nourishing and maintaining it by these daily (e) Meetings of Christians, those who did assemble to eat and drink, blessing God for what he bestow'd on them, they have chang'd it into the Mass, which we observe to this Day with little Profit and Salvation, except that the Intentions of some may be to do it in the Spirit and Desire which Jesus Christ had when he appointed it, and left it in his Testament. It is to this I exhort you, Sir, that you may lose no Occasions of following the Designs of God, and that you deceive no body in teaching them that they have done enough in going to Mass: For tho' they should hear a hundred every Day, this would avail them nothing if they have not Charity, which is not now cherish'd amongst Christians tho' they assemble every Day to Mass; because they are not taught for what it is instituted, since these *Romanists* have turn'd all things to their greater Advantage. If we would examine narrowly all the other Sacraments, we would find all the same Mischiefs done to the Interest of Salvation by those new Inventions and Changes.

I said to her; *That it were better than that I did not exercise the Ecclesiastical Functions, since there was so much Abuse and Hazard in them.*

She said; You would not do Ill, Sir, to abstain from them, and to live as if you were no Priest, were it not that not having as yet Light enough to discover the Evils which are hid in them, you would by degrees fall into Scruples for leaving off all your pious Exercises. Pray to God that he may let you see what you ought to do; and

(b) *Acts* 2. 46. (c) *Luke* 22. 19. *John* 6. 55. (d) *1 Cor.* 13. 1,
— 4. (e) *Acts* 6. 1, 2.

he will shew you (as he does me) that all holy things are become prophane, and that there is not any thing in this *Roman Church* which does not savour of its Corruption. All People believe that having declared their Sins to the Priest, and got Absolution from him, they are pardoned, tho' it (f) is God only who can pardon Sins. The Priest can indeed pray for the Penitent who humbles himself to declare his Sins as an Intercessour between God and the Penitent; but he cannot pardon him by his own Authority. He may indeed judge by the Word of God if the Penitent in Justice be disposed to have the Pardon of his Sins, and may give him Ground to hope that he shall obtain it of God, but not deceive him by making him believe that he himself will pardon them, if so be he declare them to him; for this Declaration will do nothing without a sincere and a firm Resolution of (g) Amendment, which God regards, that he may pardon according to his straight Righteousness, and not according to the Judgment of the Priest, who may be mistaken as well as all other Men. How could God have so little Equity as to commit to some frail Men the Power of saving and damning others? What Justice could there be that a Confessour for want of the Intention to absolve, should by this means damn thousands of Persons who made their Confessions to him? It must needs be an horrible Blasphemy against God, for any to have such a Persuasion, that a well-meaning Person, truly penitent, after having duly confess'd, dying in this State, should be damn'd, because the Priest had not the Intention to absolve him. If this were true, it would be to render God a Tyrant; because all our good Works would serve us for nothing, in case our Salvation did depend upon a good or ill Absolution. These Thoughts or this Belief would make us fall into Idolatry, in taking Men for God, who could save or damn according to their Fancies. This God himself would never do, because he can never depart from his Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth, to judge us always according to them; whereas Men full of Passion, Injustice, and Impiety, could not but judge us according to these. How little Wisdom should we attribute to God in believing that he would give Men Power to save and damn us? He who has commanded us to worship none but (h) one God alone, he should give us Occasion of worshipping all these Confessors, who would be the Saviours

(f) Mark 2. 7. (g) Prov. 28. 13. (h) Deut. 6. 13.

of all Christians? Do you not palpably feel, Sir, what evident Perils there are in the Administration of those Sacraments, after the manner they are used at present? It were far better to be Idle than to do Evil. 'Tis no Wonder that I doubt of the Salvation of Christians now, when I see in their religious Functions so many things against the Righteousness, the Goodness, and the Truth of God. Nevertheless I will not give you Advice in this: You may with your own natural Judgment discern aright Truth from Lying, and thereafter resolve to continue or leave off your *Ecclesiastical Functions*: For God never constrains any body, each one remaining free to chuse the Means which he perceives to be most expedient, without believing any thing blindly, no more what I say, Sir, than if another said it to you: But enter into your self, that you may judge uprightly of the pure Truth, you will perceive and feel it if you be disengag'd from all the Discourses which these *Romanists* have forg'd, to make their Authority valid. Free your Spirit of all sorts of Imaginations and Arguments, and come to the Center of the Truth to judge if God would in Justice put our Damnation or our Salvation into the Power of any Man unknown to us, who might be a wicked Person or a Sorcerer; in which Case he would damn as many Souls as he could to gratifie the Devil, to whom he belong'd. It must not be said in this, God is Almighty, or his Works are incomprehensible: For he never exerts his Power without his Righteousness, which is (i) not incomprehensible but makes it self (k) be seen and comprehended by all those who seriously consider it: Because no Good is perfect, if it be not communicated and known.

I said to her; *It was much to be fear'd, I had committed many Faults thro' my blind Submission to this Roman Church, enquiring of her the Means to repair them.*

She said; All that is past is no longer in your Power: You must beg Pardon of God, who is full of Mercy, and does not so much reprove the Faults which are done with a good Meaning as those which are done thro' pure Wickedness. Tho' Ignorance does not excuse Sin, yet it lessens its Malignity; because it has not the full Consent of the Will. But now endeavour to search more to the Bottom the Things which concern your Salvation, and (l) *Do not believe every Spirit, but try if what you are to do or believe,*

(i) *Wisd.* 12. 14. (k) *Pf.* 98. 97, 2. (l) 1 *John* 4. 1.

be of God, or of Men, or of the Devil : For all that is not of God, is evil (*m*) ; and for want of discovering this Truth each one runs blindly to his own Perdition, believing even that they do well in following so great a Number, of great and wise Men who maintain this blind Submission (*n*), which is not fit but for mean Spirits, tho' so many of good Judgment have followed it for this long time by-gone ; which could not have been found without some Insatiation of the Understanding with which the Devil has possess'd all those who lean'd to their own Wisdom or Authority. These having their Minds bewitch'd, have insinuated their Errors or Ignorances into others ; and so the Devil by little and little gains all ; some by Malice and others by Ignorance : So that I do not see any Remedy can be put to this but by the total Ruin of this *Roman Church*, the (*o*) Fall of which will open the Eyes of all those who are not in Covenant with the Devil ; which covenanted Persons will continue in their Darkness, notwithstanding of the Light that is given : But others, tho' Wicked, will be obliged to confess their Delusions, cursing those who have thus deceived them, under the Masque and Colour of Good. How many Priests, Monks and Religious, have said and yet say, Come to us who are Christ, we'll pardon you your Sins ; Give us, and you shall be saved. But Jesus Christ forbids us (*p*) to go here and there while they say to us that Christ is there.

I ask'd her, *How the Righteousness of God could permit so great a Number to perish thro' Ignorance ?*

She said ; It is a culpable Ignorance ; Because we have always had the Means to search the Truth if we had had a Desire to find it : For the Gospel was recoverable, especially in the *Roman Church*, where it remains as the Testament that Jesus Christ has left his Spouse. What Unrighteousness was there in God, in suffering these Persons to remain in the Ignorance of their Errours, since they loved them (*q*) more than the Truth ? and because these Errours were more agreeable to their Sensualities, they have voluntarily followed them, building on (*r*) the Flatteries of those who promis'd them Salvation by these Errours. It would be rather an Unright-

(*m*) *Matth* 1. 5. 13, 14. (*n*) *Matth*. 15. 14. (*o*) *Rev*. 19. 1, 9. (*p*) *Matth*. 24. 26. (*q*) *1 Thes*. 2. 10, 11, 12. (*r*) *2 Pet*. 2. 18, 19.

teousness in God, if he had constrain'd them to follow his Truth, after having given them their Free-Will: He could not take it back again without Injustice, no more than we can any thing that we have given to another. It is not in our Power to take it again without committing a Robbery: Because the thing given away, does not any longer appertain to us. Thus God by an exact Righteousness, may let the Ignorants err; Because their Ignorance is affected: For if their Ignorance were out of Simplicity, God is so good that he would rather send an Angel from Heaven to enlighten them, that (s) they might not perish; but (t) when the Free Person gives ear to Flatteries, and to those who study to speak recording as they desire to hear, he ought not in Justice to hinder them. For it is most true, that if I were to Day among these erring Ignorants, and if I told them the Truth, I would not be heard, and far less followed: Because they who teach them these Errors, speak more to their Liking and accommodate themselves more to their Sensualities than the Truth does; which often reproves them, and never flatters them. Thus they with just Reason are abandoned to the Spirit of Error; since according to the Saying of the Gospel, *They (u) have loved Darknes more than Light.* Therefore they shall perish in the Darknes which they love. If you knew, Sir, the Righteousness of God, it would be impossible that you could once doubt of it: For it is so just that neither Man nor the Devil can find any thing in Truth to blame in it: But when we look on Things on the Outside, and according to our Ignorance, it seems to us that God does unjust things, when they are most perfect.

(s) *Psal.* 25. (24,) 8. (t) *2 Tim.* 4. 3. 4. (u) *John* 3. 19.

The Eighth Conference.

*What are the Sins against the Holy Ghost,
and how much they prevail.*

I Entreated her to tell me, *In what Sense she understood that all Christians do now live and die in the Sin against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven them, neither in this World, nor in the other, as she had sometime declared to me?*

She said; Sir, 'tis most true, the most Pious now-a-days are lost by these Sins: For no body is aware of them, and they believe that they are the Sins which are abominable before Men; because they shall not be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the other (a); But they are only spiritual Sins, which a Man may commit without having done an ill Action: Therefore they shall never be forgiven, because they do not know them; and far less will they repent of them. For this Cause they will not be forgiven in this World: For no Sin is forgiven here without (b) true Repentance and absolute Desire of Amendment; which two Conditions are not to be met with in the Matter of those Sins against the Holy Ghost: For they are contrary to Repentance and to Amendment; and therefore will not be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the other: For no body will then receive Forgiveness, but they who shall receive the Truth; which those who commit one of these Sins do resist, by impugning the known Truth: So that the said Sins will neither be forgiven in this World, nor in that to come. I do not speak of an imaginary Paradise; because no Sin enters there, and consequently they cannot be forgiven if there be none. But in the other World, which shall be the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, he will yet find many Sins to be forgiven (c) at his coming: Nevertheless those committed against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven there no more than here in this World; because they are opposed to all the Means which can procure this Pardon. It is of

(a) *Matth. 12. 31. (b) Acts 2. 37, 38. (c) Rev. 1. 7. compare
Ezek. 12. 16.*

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these that Jesus Christ says, (e) *That he who has sinned against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who has sinned against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him: Because this Coming of the Holy Spirit on Earth is the last Mercy that God will grant the World; and he who shall resist this, can never any more repair his Fault. He must needs die in it.*

I entreated, She would shew to me in particular, the Meaning of these Sins against the Holy Ghost.

She said; Sir, I do not know them all in Order, but I shall speak of those which I remember, beginning with that of the Presumption of being saved without good Works. This concerns all those who profess to live well (f): For amongst them there are very few who do good Works; because they esteem their Works good, when they appear such to their own Judgment or that of some others, tho' very often, they are not such before God: because all that's good before him must partake of his Goodness, which is always Righteous and True. Now our good Works for the most part have neither the one nor the other of these Conditions: For they are done, either out of Humane Respects, or out of Natural Inclination, or they are not truly good in themselves: and when we do any good Works out of Humane Respects, they are not good before God, and can never make us obtain Salvation; because we have received our Reward in this World, having obtain'd the end for which we have done them, to wit, the Satisfaction of Men, and we have no right to pretend to any other Recompence: And if we have done our good Works out of Natural Inclinations, or for our own Satisfaction, these Works likewise can give us no Pretension to Salvation; because they are rewarded by the Satisfaction which we have received in them. Thirdly, we do Works, as good, which are but indifferent, or indeed, sometimes evil. For to go to Church only out of Custom, is an indifferent Work; and if being there, we behave as in a prophane Place, it is an evil Work. It is the same as to the frequenting of the Sacraments: And if we give Alms thro' some Natural Tenderness or Inclination this Work has not that Righteousness nor Goodness to make it pass for Good in God's Sight. So that to do no good Works before God, and notwithstanding to presume of Salvation, is a Sin against the Holy Ghost: So that we believe we have merited Salvation by good Works, which do not de-

[e] *Matth. 12. 31, 32.* (f) *Matth. 6. 1, — 8.*

rive their Goodness from God. Nevertheless we think he is obliged to give us Paradise (g) as the most part of Pious and Religious Persons do, presuming to have that by Right of Justice which is not due to them; because there are none but true Righteousness and Charity that can be call'd good Works by which we may hope for Salvation: And tho' none be adorned with these Vertues, each one notwithstanding believes he shall obtain it, as if God could save without Righteousness.

There is also another Sin against the Holy Ghost, which is *to impugn the known Truth*. This is now commonly Practis'd by those who are called Spiritual.

For if we should tell any of them that they are not true Christians, or that we live in the Reign of Antichrist, or that the World is judged, and that its Wickedness is come to the Height, they would believe nothing of this; loving rather to stick to their old Customs, than to learn how they may become true Christians, and they would likewise scruple to believe that we are fallen into the Reign of Antichrist tho' we see by Mens Lives and Manners, that of Necessity, they must be engag'd to the Devil; and tho' they see no Hope or Appearance that the World will grow better, yet they do not believe that 'tis judged. Thus they impugn the Truth of all these things, the Belief of which might bring them to Conversion and to a Life leading to Salvation; but they impugn all these Truths, that they may continue in their so dangerous Darkness, tho' they be sufficiently known to all those who will open their Eyes: But they who will impugn the Truth, commit this Sin against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the other: For they will never be converted (g), because of the Resistance which they make to the Truth, which is that that gives Salvation. They know well enough that their Life is not that of a true Christian: Nevertheless they impugn this Truth; because they have no Desire to become one. They see the Devil rules thro' all in Lyes and Deceits, and that all oppose the Doctrine of Jesus Christ; and they will not believe that this is the time of Antichrist, that they might resist and beware of him, and by impugning this Truth, they desire not to avoid his Snares. They see that Wickedness is universally at a Height; and they will not

(g) *Mat.* 7. 21, 22, 25, 11. (b) *2 Tim.* 3. 8.

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believe that the World is judged, that they may not be afraid of this Judgment.

Another Sin against the Holy Ghost, is the Envy of the spiritual Good of others, which is so generally committed, that almost they make no Reflection on it, and among the most Pious this Envy is the most ordinary. We may only remark the several Orders of Religious Persons: They are almost insupportable to one another, each one valuing his own Order and Community, and they cannot hear the Perfections and Praises of others mentioned, without having a spiritual Envy against them secretly in their Hearts; and even if a particular Person among them excel the rest in spiritual Good, he would be envied, yea, hardly used by all the rest, or imprisoned, if he should live in greater Perfection among them than generally they do, or should declare the truth of their Faults: So that if a votary of any of their Religious Orders, should observe literally the Gospel which Jesus Christ has left us, I believe he would be martyr'd, or so hardly us'd by the rest, that it would be impossible for him to live among them without suffering a thousand Deaths of Persecutions; and for any secular Person who would observe the Gospel in the World, he would be envied likewise by all those who profess to be virtuous and are not, who would reject with Contempt this manner of Practice, which would not be conformable to their own: For there is such a secret Pride in their Hearts that they cannot suffer that another should lead a better Life than themselves, nor even that he should have the Name of it; but they would endeavour to vilifie and despise him, or make him to be suspected of Levity or other Evils; in which is now fulfilled the Prediction of Jesus Christ, when he says, *(i) You shall be hated of all for my Name's sake*: For the Apostles were never hated of all; because many still lov'd and follow'd them: But at present this Warning is fully accomplished; because he who walks in the Truth is hated of all: For this Sin against the Holy Ghost of the spiritual envying of another, possesses the Hearts of all those who make a Profession of Vertue: Because having no true Vertue, they envy that which is true and continue therein all their Days without desiring to change, because they do not esteem this a Sin, but rather *Wisdom*; that they will not own what they do not practise, covering this Sin with a Fidelity and

(i) Luk. 21. 17.

Constancy in what has been first taught them : And thus they die in Envy.

Another Sin against the Holy Ghost, which is *Obstinacy in Sin*, is also in use amongst those who make a Profession of Vertue : For not being willing to own the forementioned things to be Sins, they continue obstinate in them, and therefore will not be forgiven ; because they will not ask Pardon nor repent of them : For as much as they are persuaded that they are not Sins, because they are inward and spiritual : Therefore they die in *Obstinacy in Sin* : And even tho' they should live till the other World, they would not be converted from the Presumption of their Salvation ; because they are possess'd with a good Opinion of their good Works, neither will they submit to the Truth, which would shew them the contrary. Thus they commit this Sin with the other following ones, which are against the Holy Ghost.

Wilful Murder is also committed by the same spiritual Persons, and they will not acknowledge it : For very often they occasion Death to themselves or others by their sensual or indiscreet Inclinations. How many of those do we see wedded to their Appetites of Eating, Drinking and other bodily Exercises, tho' they be prejudicial to their Health ? They will not change nor leave them, even tho' they be advertis'd of it. How many die before their time by too much Eating or Drinking or taking something prejudicial to their Health or thro' too much Labour ? And on the contrary, how many are there who kill themselves by indiscreet Fastings, or other Penances, or the Neglect of necessary things ? All those are wilful Murtherers, because they kill themselves, to satisfy their own Sensualities or Inclinations ; and they are also often Murtherers of others ; because they occasion sometimes their Neighbours Death by indirect Ways, as in forcing some to work beyond their Strength, or in crossing and vexing them so much in their Goods and in their Spirit, that they die of Grief ; or by not taking away Debates and Quarels when they can do it, and these encrease till they come to kill one another ; or when by some Act or Omission they occasion the Rise of such Debates ; or when one comes to die thro' the Neglect of our necessary Succour or Assistance. By all these things wilful Murder is committed ; tho' the Will be indirect, it ceases not to be before God as great a Sin as a direct Murther : For the Life is taken away indirectly as well as directly : And sometimes it would be less evil to kill a Person at one

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one Stroke, than to kill him by degrees ; and the Sin also would sometimes be less, by a Stroke given in a sudden Passion, than when it lasts for so long a time ; and these Sins are often repeated. Nevertheless none do perceive these kinds of Sins to be such as they are ; but the most spiritual fall into them thro' Negligence, and very often without desiring to know them : And thus while they do not repent of them, they cannot obtain Pardon no more than of the other Sins against the Holy Ghost, because they are committed secretly, and without Repentance ; which draws on a Despair of Salvation, which is also one of those Sins. This *Despair of Salvation* is ordinarily excited by the Devil at the End of their Life. When he has train'd up Souls in the other Sins against the Holy Ghost he discovers them to them at Death to make them fall into Despair of their Salvation : For then their Eyes being open'd to consider the great Number of Sins which they have committed against the Holy Ghost, all the Days of their Life, of which they have never repented, and how often they have receiv'd the Sacraments in this evil State : This makes them fall into a Despair of being saved ; because the Soul is disordered, and cannot perceive the Means of its Salvation : Yea, tho' they should not distinctly perceive all those Sins, they are notwithstanding in such Confusion and Perplexity that they durst not hope for Salvation, and they would be ashamed to declare their Misery to Men, who still held them for good Men. Hence it is that these Souls die without Repentance, which is the Consummation of all their Evils : For by the straight Righteousness of God no Sins will ever be pardoned without Repentance ; and they, not embracing this, die miserably, tho' they have lived in a seeming Holiness, they go notwithstanding to receive their Portion with Devils ; even tho' they had but one of these Sins against the Holy Ghost, they shall never be saved.

I said to her ; *That I began to doubt of the Salvation of all Men, since they who are called Saints do so commonly perish : That these Sins against the Holy Ghost were so much to be dreaded, and nevertheless so few are afraid of them ; that God's Judgment of things is quite different from that of Men.*

She said ; Yes, truly Sir, God's Judgment is quite another thing than Man's (1) : For most frequently what they e-

(k) If. 55. 8, 9. (1) Luke 16. 15.

steem Good is in God's sight very bad. This is since they left his Righteousness and lean'd to their own. They are now incapable of making a right Judgment; because their own Righteousness is blind, and founded only on their own Imaginations, and not at all on the Truth, which could never deceive them: For it is unchangeable, and without Dissimulation; but the Truth and Righteousness of Men is lying and deceitful, and he who trusts in it, must of Necessity perish; because it flatters us to our Perdition. If we had continued in the Righteousness of God, our Judgment would have been conformable to his: But since we are fallen into Unrighteousness, we judge unrighteously, both in respect of God and of our selves: For we judge falsely of God on all Occasions, attributing very often to him the Blame of our Damnation, and of all the other Evils which befall us: Tho' notwithstanding no Evil can come from God, he being the Fountain of all Good, to which all Evils are opposite: We may also judge amiss as to our selves, believing often our Salvation to be sure, when it is in great Hazard as you may see by the Deduction of the Sins against the Holy Ghost, of which I have so particularly spoken to you, to let you see, Sir, how the most Pious are deceived, since they strayed from the Righteousness and the Truth of God, they are full of frivolous Devotions, which blind their Understanding, that they know not real Truth, nor solid Vertue, but amusing themselves with the Discourses of Men, and seeming Verues, they live and die in a Presumption of their Salvation, without good Works, and thus they perish for ever.

THE

The Ninth Conference.

That no body can be saved, but he who professes the Goodness, Righteousness and Truth of God. The World is at present without them, but it shall be renewed. The Danger that Men are in. Secret Evil ought to be discovered.

I said to her ; That many would be deceived at Death ; because no body is endued with that Goodness, Righteousness and Truth of God ; and if there can be no Salvation without these no body will be saved, or very few.

She said ; No, Sir, no body can be saved if he do not possess (a) the RIGHTEOUSNESS, the GOODNESS and the TRUTH of God. Therefore Jesus Christ says, (b). *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.* He does not mean that we should be perfect as God, in his Power or his Essence ; but in proportion to our being in his Righteousness, his Goodness and Truth. The Righteousness of God makes us do all things justly, as well in Regard of our Enemies, as of our Friends and our selves : so that we must always, at all times, and on all Occasions, be righteous both in Word and Deed. In this consists the Righteousness of God : For if we are righteous only according to our own Inclinations, we have nothing but a Humane Righteousness, which ends with us, and cannot save us. Consider, Sir, the Righteousness of the Pharisee (c), you'll see that he fasted twice a Week, paid Tithes of all that he possess'd, and did other good things in the Judgment of Men ; and notwithstanding he is rejected by God, and not justified ; which makes it appear to us sufficiently, that to be saved, we must have another Righteousness than our own ; that it must be conformable to the Righteousness of God, or else it will not avail us for Eternity ; because it is said else-

(a) Ps. 15. (14). Ps. 112, (111,) 4. (b) Matth. 5. 48. (c) Luke 18 10, 14.

where, (d) If your Righteousness exceed not that of the *Pharisees*, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Nevertheless there are very few who attain to the Righteousness of the *Pharisee*, and yet every one believes he shall be saved, tho' he has neither Divine nor Humane Righteousness. Must there not be many deceived at Death? For to have the Goodness of God also, a Man must do Good to all, (e) without respect of Persons, and he must nor do Evil (f). For he who is evil in something ceases to be good, and to partake of the Goodness of God, who does always good, and never does evil. And to have the Truth of God, a Man must be true in all things; which Men are very far from: For they lye in all things, to God, to themselves, and to their Neighbour. They lye to God, in saying that they love him, and are resigned to him, while there is not so much as one Person in the World that is resigned to the Will (g) of God. Every one will needs depend on himself, and follow his own Will, or that of some other Person he has chosen for these Ends and is not satisfied with the Will of God, except in so far as it is conformable to his Inclinations. We lye also to our selves, persuading our selves that we are Christians, tho' we do not in any of our Actions follow the Instructions of Jesus Christ: We make our selves believe that we are just and vertuous, that we would not offend God in any thing, while we do it every Moment, having nothing in the sight of God but an imaginary and hypocritical Righteousness and Perfection. We lye also in respect of our Neighbour, who looking upon our outward Works of Devotion, or Habits, or Words, thinks that we are such before God as we appear; but it is not so. In fine, we are as far remov'd from the Truth of God, as Hell is from Heaven; and also from his Righteousness and Goodness; and yet we think to be saved! What a great Presumption is this of Salvation, without good Works, which will never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the other: For we will never repent, because of unknown Blindness! For he who should know it, would endeavour to find out a Remedy or Cure; and would say as the blind Man in the Gospel (h) Lord, that I may see! But as long as we believe that we see clearly, we take no care to search for Remedies to an evil that we will

(d) *Matth.* 5. 20. (e) *Matth.* 5. 44, 45. (f) *Rom.* 13. 10. 3 *Joh.* 11. (g) *II.* 59. 15, 16. (h) *Luke* 18. 41.

not know which causes the Damnation of all Men in the World, because none are free of this horrible Darkneſs.

These laſt Words made me tremble, being joyned to thoſe ſhe had ſaid before; that there was not ſo much as one Man in the World who was reſigned to God. I aſked her how it was poſſible that God ſhould create all Men to be damn'd?

She ſaid; Sir, God hath created no body to be damn'd; (i) but all Men for Salvation: For God can damn no body. It muſt needs ſtill be that Man damns himſelf of his own Free-Will; otherwiſe God ſhould do an evil thing, which he cannot do, but does all good. This being ſo, Sir, you muſt aſk Men, each one in particular, how is it poſſible that they damn themſelves? But you muſt not aſk God, how is it poſſible that each one is damn'd? For he would aſwer, it is (k) becauſe they'll be ſo of their own Free-Will; which ſhall never be taken from them. Every one damn uſ himſelf, for his own particular, and all theſe particular Damnations being put together, make this general Damnation, which God cannot hinder: (l) For he cannot ſave ſo much as one Soul without the Conſent of the Free-Will which he has once given it; letting each one enjoy this Free-Will without any Conſtraint; all Men in particular are free to damn themſelves, as they do; becauſe they will not reſign themſelves to the Will of God, which Reſignation would aſſuredly ſave them, rendering them happy both in this World, and the other. But ſince we will not continue in a Dependence on God, but will follow and depend on our own Wills, we render our ſelves miſerable, both in this World, and to all Eternity. The Sins of our firſt Parents ought to have made uſ wiſe: For by forſaking this Dependence, they brought on themſelves all ſorts of Miſeries; and we not ſatisfied to groan yet under theſe by participation, do daily encreaſe them by our own proper Reſolution, that we will not be rul'd and govern'd by the ſame God, who demands of uſ the ſame Dependence which he demanded of thoſe our firſt Parents; which we do conſtantly deny him, and will needs depend on our own Will, and follow it as much as we can, without informing our ſelves of the Will of God. Now every one doing this as to his own particular, is it a Wonder that all in general periſh ſince none in particular will reſign himſelf to the Will of God, without which no body ſhall be ſaved?

(i) 1 Tim. 2. 4, 5. (k) Prov. 8. 36. Wiſd. 1. 16. (l) Matth. 23. 27.
I aſk'd

I ask'd, If God could have created so beautiful a World, with all that is within it, only for Men, who will damn themselves since all in general will needs depend on their own Wills, and that no Person in the World is resigned to the Will of God.

She said; God has not created this beautiful World, Sir, for these Men who shall be reprobated, but for the Elect only; and those who of their free Choice and Free-Will shall depend entirely on God, and be ruled and governed wholly at his Pleasure, renouncing altogether their own Will and Desires (m). These shall enjoy to all Eternity this beautiful World, with all that is within it, in all Perfection, as I have already told you, Sir, the World shall last always, and none of the Works of God shall ever perish; neither Men, nor Beasts, nor any other Creatures; but each of them in their kind, shall remain for ever for the Honour of God and the Delight of Men who shall live after the Extermination of all Evil.

But if the Men who live now, will not resign themselves to the Will of God, but follow that of the Devil or their own: These shall not possess the World, but shall only sojourn in it for a little time, and they shall go out of it without carrying any thing away but the Sins with which they have loaded themselves during so short a Voyage: But all that is beautiful and good in the World, shall remain for the Elect (n), who shall enjoy it to all Eternity. For if this were not, we shou'd have indeed a mean God, who had created the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, all the Elements, so many different Creatures as there are in the World, and all this only for the Devil, and for Men who will damn themselves, as they do at present. It wou'd follow that God shou'd have little Power to be thus frustrated of his Pretensions, in having created so many excellent things, if they shou'd serve only for the Use of the Reprobate, and the Devil shou'd carry away all the Fruits of the six Days Labours which he did in creating this beautiful World, if all this shou'd be for the Devil and his Adherents! No, no, Sir, this cannot go so. God must have his time to reign over all his Creatures, that they may adore and know him the only true God, and that the Number of his elect may be multiplied, as much as he has destin'd them; that these never dying, may bless him to all Eternity. This is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ which

(m) Ps. 37. (n) Rev. 21. 7. Is. 60. 21. 65. 9, ---25.

I wait for, Sir, with Chearfulness. Nothing can afflict me in this-Hope. It is a joyful Life to think on it, what Joy must it be to possess it?

I said to her ; *That these Words did ravish me with Pleasure ; but that I had also in Exchange the Grief to believe, that all Men now are in a State of Damnation, for fear lest I also be of the Number.*

She replied ; You may indeed rejoice, Sir, 'Tis the greatest Ground of Joy that we can ever have. 'Tis the Master-piece of all the Works of God, and (o) the Accomplishment of all things. For this the World is created, for this Man is created, and for this God is become Man. The Coming of Jesus Christ in Sufferings, was for Sinners ; but his glorious Coming will be for the Righteous. Therefore he says, being in the World, (p) *I am not come to save the Righteous, but to bring Sinners to Repentance.* God from all Eternity design'd to become Man, to the end he might not only make Man like to him, but that God also might be like to Man, that he might take his perfect and compleat Delight with him. 'Tis good to consider this, Sir, that God is not become Man, only on design to suffer and to die : For this would have been a sad Subject ; and the ancient Patriarchs wou'd have had little Ground to have prayed and desired so earnestly that God should become Man to see him hardly used, suffering Reproaches, Scourges, and so cruel a Death. The Love they bare to God wou'd rather have made them desire to remain in their Captivity, than to be delivered from it at so dear a Price as the Sufferings and the Death of God-Man. All those Wishes and Aspirations which all the Fathers and Prophets of the ancient Law made, cou'd not be for this Coming in Sufferings ; but rather that glorious Coming, wherein Jesus Christ (q) *being lifted up, will draw all Men unto him* ; which his Death on the Cross has not done, because very few followed him then, and no body follows him at present. This is very far from drawing all to him, seeing so few have been drawn from the Beginning of the World eventill now. Must there not a Time come wherein that he may fulfil his Word, he will draw all in general to him ? Must he not also to make the same Accomplishment (r) *take away the Sins of the World* ? For his Death, instead of

(o) Rev. 21. 6. (p) Matth. 9. 13. (q) Jos. 12. 32. (r) John 1. 29.

taking away the Sins of the World, has rather brought on more; because they have encreas'd and multiply'd since. Can God fail in his Promise? Must there not come a time when he will take away all the Sins of the World? If this were not, God shou'd not be faithful in his Promises; which cannot be true: For (s) *Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but his Promises shall not pass away.* There is not a Syllable of them which shall not have its entire Accomplishment in an altogether perfect Sence. They wou'd sometimes make us believe that all this shall be fulfilled in Paradise; and they tell us that nothing defiled can enter there: How then shall there be Sins there to be taken away? And if all the Blessed are anited to him, there will be no more need of drawing them.

I said to her; *That I was so convinced, as to believe that we must look for a new World and a new Earth, and that I knew well enough that nothing of the holy Scripture shall have its Accomplishment in this World; but that I was not freed from the Trouble of believing that all Men now were in a State of Damnation, of which Number I was one, tho' nevertheless I desired to be saved, whatever it cost.*

She said; Sir, to discover Truths, you must always take things in their Source. Consider, I pray you, that the Coming of Jesus Christ in Sufferings, was for no other Grounds but to make known to Men their Sins. in which they liv'd so blindly that the most Part knew not what they did, but followed one another insensibly in the Way of Perdition, as they do yet at present, God of his great Mercy wou'd have become Man before his Coming in Glory, that he might bring Light to Sinners, whereby they might know their Sins, and to teach them in particular what they ought to do and avoid, to the end they may observe the Law of God, which he came not to change nor abolish, no more than to give a new one; but only to teach the Means by which Men shou'd easily attain to the observing of this Law of God, which was given from the Beginning of the World, and will never be changed: For God will never demand any other thing of Men but the Dependence, which they ought always to acknowledge, they have on their God, who has created them and given them all things. In the Practice of this Dependence is contain'd all the Law and the Prophets, and the Doctrine of Jesus Christ.

(s) *Matth. 24. 35.*

They can have no other thing in Substance: But Men being fallen from the observing of this first Law, have need from time to time of divers Means to raise them again from their Fall. For these ends Jesus Christ is come into the World timously, and ere it perish, before his limited time; that taking Humane Flesh, he might teach Men palpably, according to their Senses, to the end they might not be any more ignorant of any thing, but might get out of Darkness to discover their Sins, and see clearly the Way they ought to take, to come to Salvation. And that those Means which Jesus Christ came to teach them, might not seem too grievous and difficult to them, he would needs pave the Way himself, and put them in practice all the time he was on Earth, to the end Men might afterwards follow his Steps (t), and imitate his Example. By this Foundation, Sir, you can easily discover whether all Men be in the Way of Salvation or Damnation. Lay this down first, that (u) no body shall be saved but he who keeps the Law of God. Secondly, that Men thro' their Frailty, cannot observe this Law but by such Means as Jesus Christ has taught them (x); because they imagine that they live in a Dependence upon God, when they do but depend on their own Wills. To make this known, Jesus Christ teaches them, that to be his, (y) they must deny themselves. Not that this Law of denying ones self, was ordain'd in these precise Words in the Beginning of the World, but it was tacitly contain'd in the Law of *LOVING ONE GOD ONLY*; because we cannot love him only, when we love our selves; and whereas Men did not understand well the Contents of this Law, Jesus Christ is come to explain it to us so particularly by all the Precepts of his Gospel, that no body can be ignorant any longer, how he ought to keep the Law of God, and consequently, work out his Salvation; because this Gospel Law does precisely mark out to us all that we ought to do and to avoid: So that we must not look any longer from any, neither from God nor Men, for other Instructions in order to our Salvation; because Jesus Christ has omitted nothing, nor said any thing that is superfluous, but shewn us all things necessary for obtaining eternal Life.

(t) 1 Pet. 2. 21. (u) *Marth.* 7. 21. (x) *Rom.* 8. 3. (y) *Matth.* 16. 24.

Now consider, Sir, if you know any living this Day in the World who have entirely resign'd their Wills to that of God, and who love no other thing but him. If you do not know any, be firmly persuaded, that none within your Knowledge, is in a State of Salvation. And fearing lest you be deceived by this general Persuasion, as many are, who persuade themselves that they are resign'd to God, and love none but him; remark particularly if they observe the Gospel Law: For we cannot observe the one without practising the other: For he who has entirely resign'd his Will to that of God, (*z*) lives no longer to himself, but God lives in him, and works there all that Jesus Christ has taught; seeing the same Spirit lives in one resign'd to God, which lived in the Body of Jesus Christ. There can never be any difference here, being in both the same unchangeable God.

I said to her; *That this being supposed, I had good Ground to fear, that all the World was in a State of Damnation, and I likewise, but that I would get out of this Darknes, and receive the Light that God should give me, that I might follow him.*

She said; Sir, you'll be happy in doing it: For otherwise it is to be feared, you may perish with others; because all the World goes on blindly to Perdition; but the Light (a) is now arisen in Darknes. Do not reject it, (b) to love your Darknes rather than the Light; but rather (c) walk according to it while the Day doth last, that is to say, our short Life, which is nothing but a Day in Comparison with Eternity: The Night of this Day, is our Death, after which there is nothing more to do: In whatsoever (d) State we die, we shall abide in it. Therefore we ought not to let the Occasion slip that is now offered us. Let not your self be gained by Flatteries, nor by false Persuasions. Seek always the Truth: For they who flatter us, (e) ruine us. Look on all those as Flatterers, who speak to you according to their sensual Inclinations, and hold those for Deceivers who persuade you that you are a good Christian, and that you will be saved after the Way that you live at present: For there are no true Christians but those who follow and imitate

(*z*) Gal. 2. 20. (*a*) Is. 58. 10. (*b*) Joh. 3. 19. (*c*) Joh. 12. 35, 36. (*d*) Eccl. 11. 3. (*e*) Is. 9. 15.

Conf. IX. ! *Righteousness, Goodness, &c.* 65

the Life and Doctrine of Jesus Christ; and there is no Salvation to be hop'd for, but in keeping the Law of God. You must take up with these two Things, Sir, if you wou'd attain to Salvation, the Law of God and the Doctrine of Jesus. The Holy Spirit, which is now come into the World, brings no new Law, nor new Explanations of it; because Jesus Christ has sufficiently explained it: He comes only to make the Law appear (f) and the Sins that are opposite to it, to the end that we may embrace the one and reject the other. You have wondred sometimes that I told you so many evil Things of the Church and of spiritual Persons: Believe me, this was not but by the Light of the Holy Spirit, that you might avoid the Evil in order to the doing well, since you cannot love the one without hating the other: Truth must always discern the one from the other, or otherwise you will be easily deceived, as all the World at present is, who take Vice for Vertue, and apparent for true good. Therefore receive the true Light, that you may judge uprightly, and not according to the Appearance of Things: For the Devil is so covered with Virtue, and cloathed with Hypocrisie, that he deceives even those of the best Dispositions. There are frequently so many false Goods in the World, that we do not distinguish them from the true: And that we may not come to discover them, he puts some Scruples in the Minds of good Men, that they may not believe the Truth of the Evil, and makes his Adherents teach, that 'tis a Sin of Detraction to discover the Faults of Priests, and of those who make a Profession of Vertue, that their Sins remaining secret, they may deceive the more, and may commit them more honourably; and they say, *that a Man should take his own Garments to cover the sins of the Priests.* That you may see that this Doctrine comes from the Devil, you need but mark what Jesus Christ did in such Encounters; whether he covered with his Garments the Sins of the Popes, Bishops and Priests who were in his time. We will find (g) that he declared them openly before all the World, calling them *Hypocrites, Generation of Vipers, wicked Sepulchres*, and so many other Names, to the end he might declare to People their Wickedness, that they might beware of them: For he says, (h) *beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees, and (i) of those who come to you in*

(f) *John 16. 8.* (g) *Matth. 23. 8.* (h) *Mat. 16. 6.* (i) *Mat. 7. 15.*

Sheeps Cloathing, and inwardly are ravening Wolves. All this, with many other Evils, Jesus Christ spoke of the Priests of his time ; and now they teach that we must honour them and speak well of them, tho' they live ill ! Does not this Doctrine oppose that of Jesus Christ ? and therefore it is Antichristian. Nevertheless, you, Sir, with so many others, think you commit a Sin to hear the Truth of Evil. 'Tis by this false Piety, that the Devil takes his Advantage: For their Evils being conceal'd, they commit them more than if they were discovered ; because Shame and Humane Respect wou'd with-hold them from Sin ; and also the Good and Pious wou'd not be so easily deceived, as they are by the good Opinion of Evil, which often draws in the Good by Ignorance, who are persuaded that they who have the Reputation of being good, wou'd not do Evil. How many thousand have been deceived after this manner ! Take heed that you never be one of these ; but stay yourself on the living Rock, which is Jesus Christ. He cannot deceive nor fail. Take up with his Instructions, Sir, and follow them. You'll be sure of your Salvation, which otherwise I cannot promise you. Whatever Men say, they are not our Saviours : For it is written, *(k) Wo to the Man that put his Confidence in Man.* He is truly miserable who grounds his Salvation on the Words and Sentiments of Men, who can give us nothing but vain Hopes, founded on their Imaginations. It is not enough to trust to these weak Stays ; we must take another Aim, and direct our Selves towards that Morning Star which appears to our Eyes, that we may follow it till we have found this Holy Spirit who must teach us all things.

(k) Jer. 1. 17, 5.

The Tenth Conference.

That the Time is come that Man shall receive the Holy Spirit in Fulness, and what hinders them to receive him.

I Ask'd her ; *How I might find the Holy Spirit ? For I could not meet with an Assembly of Apostles, nor pray with them Forty Days, that I might receive him.*

She

Conf. X. *The Time of the Holy Spirit.*

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She said; Sir, you shall receive the Holy Spirit without being in the Company of the Apostles: For even they did not receive him in Fulness, (a) but in part only, and the Promise that Jesus Christ made to send us (b) the Holy Ghost; who shall teach us all things, had not its full Accomplishment: For there were many things which the Apostles knew not; and there were also several Faults committed by them after having receiv'd the Holy Spirit. It is in these last times that the Holy Spirit comes, who shall teach us all things. If your Soul were wholly resign'd to the Will of God, it wou'd be prepared to receive the Holy Spirit in Fulness: For his time is now come. Do you not even now feel some Rays of his Light by so many different things which I have told you in our so frequent Conversation; Do you not see that many of these things have not been known nor discovered in former times? Can you doubt that there is at present a *Treasure hid* in the Earth, which begins to be discovered? From whence otherwise shou'd these precious Stones of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, come, the so fragrant Roses of true Vertue, and so many new Notices which appear in our Eyes as Buds of Paradise? Wou'd you have a Holy Spirit visible and carnal? Men since the Apostles Days have more Understanding of spiritual things. Therefore God has multiplied their Knowledge and refin'd their Understandings, that they may conceive the Light of the Holy Spirit by lively Reasons and solid Truths; not by material Forms and Figures, which were given only for outward Signs, capable of being seen by the Eyes of Flesh, which did not yet perceive those things of the Spirit: For the Holy Spirit is not a Dove, nor Wind, nor Tongues of Fire; but an intelligible Spirit who makes us know God and our selves, and brings always along with him (c) his twelve Fruits, and his (d) seven Gifts, all which are spiritual, and cannot be seen no more than their Author, but by their Operations. This is the Holy Spirit which you ought to desire, Sir, and not a visible and material one. Resign your self to God, and you shall certainly receive him: For his Time is come. He is born upon the Earth in Spirit, as he was born in Flesh in the Stable of *Bethlehem*.

(a) 1 Cor. 13. 9—12. (b) John 16. 13. (c) Matth. 13. 44. (d) Dan. 12. 4. (e) Galat. 5. 22. (f) Isa. 11. 12.

I said to her ; *There were yet many Souls in the World as well as I, who earnestly desired to receive the Holy Spirit.*

She said ; Sir, every one will say that he wou'd receive him, but I know no body yet who wou'd effectually resign his Will to God's and let himself be ruled and governed by him. We still wish for this and that according to our Bent and Inclinations. We are sorry for Adversities. We do not willingly suffer Tribulations and Crosses. We complain of Wrong and Affronts done us. We desire to be honour'd, serv'd, and lov'd, and to have our Ease. In one Word, all our Life is a constant Tract of Self-love ; and yet we say we are resign'd to God ; and if this were true, we wou'd have no longer self-will, but that of God wou'd be our Rule and our Contentment, as well in Troubles, Adversities and Derelictions, as in all sort of Prosperity and Abundance : For regarding nothing but the Will of God, we wou'd receive all things with Joy : But as long as the one's too sweet, and the other too salt to our Taste, it's a sign we yet live to our selves and are not resign'd to God, nor ready to follow his Will, and so are not dispos'd to receive the Holy Spirit, because our self-will hinders him : For he cannot operate in a Soul which is not disengag'd from its own Will, which still opposes the *Gifts* and *Fruits* of the Holy Spirit, and directly hinders his Operations. It's thus that I say I know no body, yet who'll be resign'd to the Will of God, except in Words but not in Deed. Indeed we wou'd do God's Will as long as 'tis conformable to ours ; but as soon as it opposes that, there's no more Submission. We give God our Will as long as all goes right according to our Desires and Wishes ; but as soon as the contrary falls out, we take back this given Will to dispose of it our selves : and thus we continue always full of self-love, and yet we wou'd receive forsooth, the Holy Spirit to joyn him with our Filth and Imperfections to make a very unsutable Marriage, as that wou'd be of God with Sin (g) which are two incompatible things, as Heat and Cold, which can never dwell together. Yea, truly tho' there were nothing but the Sin of self-love, it is a mortal Wound, against the Commandment of loving one God alone.

(g) 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15, 16.

The Eleventh Conference.

How Man must resign himself to God.

ISaid to her ; *That I would very willingly resign my self to God, and yield myself to be entirely governed by him, and to follow all that I shall know to be his Will.*

She said ; Sir, this *Resignation* has some *Exception* yet, and is not wholly disengag'd : For if you wait till an Angel from Heaven come to make known to you what the Will of God is, you'll no ways be resign'd to him ; but you must take (a) all that befalls you for his Will, great or small things, all comes from him, without excepting any thing : For if you are resign'd to him, you'll have no longer Desires of your own, and will no longer seek any thing : Therefore all that shall befall you, shall come by his Order ; when you take it from his Hand, you can never fail, even tho' it were the Devil himself (b) or some wicked Creature did it : he'll never permit them to hurt you (c) but in so far as it shall be his Will. 'Tis true, a wicked Man has his Liberty, to do what Evil he pleases ; but God has Power also to preserve us that their Evils do not touch us : Or if he permit them to touch us, gives us Strength to (d) suffer them, and that with Joy ; and so they can't wound us : For all worldly Good and Evil are for the most part but imaginary things ; and when our Mind is brought to take Afflictions joyfully, they seem to us Contentments, and no longer Afflictions. This depends so strongly upon our Imagination, that our Happiness and Misery seems to depend upon it. If we imagine that Riches are a Burden, Poverty will be a Repose to us. And thus it is of every other thing. Take confidently all that shall befall you for the Will of God ; for otherwise that wou'd be but like a forc'd Resignation which wou'd require to know precisely on every Occasion, if this were the Will of God or not. This Study or Application of Mind, is an Hindrance to a perfect Resignation.

(a) Job 1. 11. 2. 10. Rom. 8. 27. (b) 2. Cor. 12. 7. (c) Job 1. 12. 2. 6. (d) Phil. 1. 29.

I said to her ; *That I would take all from God's Hand ; and that I had often told her, that I yield my Will to him.*

She said ; 'Tis true, Sir, you have often said it ; but I doubt you have not done it ; because I observe often yet Oppositions in your Will. He that has gain'd a Place, does not fight against it any longer. Far better be a Conquerour than a Combatant. If your Will were given up to God, as you think, you wou'd not have it any longer : For a thing given, does not any longer belong to us. How cou'd your Will make Opposition then, if it truly belong'd to God ? You cou'd not feel any Combats of that which you had not any longer : For if I had not a Hand, I could not suffer any Evil in it. We often say and think some Things that are not true. Reflect but a little seriously, Sir, upon all your Actions, and see if you'll not find that they are done by your own Will ; Yea, even your own pious Exercises. Consider a little if it wou'd not be a trouble to you to change or leave them by reason of some Accident which God shou'd permit to befall you. This is a Sign that they proceed from your own Will : For if they did proceed from the Will of God the abstaining from them wou'd be as agreeable to you as the doing of them : For there is little on Earth, the Want of which does not give as much Honour to God as the Enjoyment of it ; and a Will resign'd to God, does no longer feel Self-contradiction : So that if such a Soul were depriv'd of all sort of Spiritual and Christian Exercises by some Accident of War, Sicknes, or other Inconveniencies, which might happen, 'twou'd not so much as regret that it cou'd not perform them ; because God's Will wou'd be more dear to it than all the Contentment it might receive in the Performance of all its pious Duties : Yea, it wou'd think it self in a more happy State ; because the Practices of Vertue brings along with them some Self-satisfactions and Pleasures, which lessens their Merits : For having receiv'd a Recompence in this World, we ought not to look for it in the other. Thus, Sir, you may see and observe, if it be true that you are resign'd to God, not only in Spiritual things, but in all temporal Affairs. I believe you will not find one that is delivered from Self-Love or natural Inclinations.

I ask'd her ; *How I could perfectly make this entire Resignation to God without ever revoking it ?*

She said ; Sir, resign your self to God in such a manner as that you no longer follow your own Will in any thing : For
(e) *He who is faithful in a few things, will be set over great things.*
(e) *Matth. 25. 21.*

things. Every Moment, and on all Occasions, you may make a Sacrifice of your own Will: For it acts always. It will see, hear, walk, and do many other things that are not needful, and always for the Glory of God. In all this, you must deny it the Satisfaction of executing these sort of Wills, which are unprofitable, and robb us of our time, that is so dear and precious: And if we must render (f) *an Account of every idle Word*, much more of idle Actions: And it shoud never be said that (g) *these are but small things*: For God takes notice of small things, since he says, that (h) *the Hairs of our Head are numbered*, and that the Leaf of a Tree shall not fall without his Permission. It is because God has given us this limited Time to do Penitence in, that he will exact an Account of it from us, even to a Moment, that it may appear wherein we employ it; and if we employ it in unprofitable Actions, according to our own Will, we are certainly to blame; because we do not accomplish the Penitence enjoin'd us, and we apply the time allotted for it, in idle and unprofitable Actions. We ought, Sir, on this Occasion, to deny our Will by way of Penitence, and to remember that we have given it to God, and that we our selves ought not any longer to dispose of it; and by combating it thus, we shall certainly overcome it: For our Will is like a Horse, which the Bridle turns whither we would lead him, If we yield it up to the good Will of God, we must constrain it to follow him in small things as well as great, or otherwise it will endeavour to escape in Perils and Dangers, and from unprofitable things will fall into evil things. The best Curb is to put the Reins into God's Hands, that he may guide as it shall seem good to him, and never take them back again; because we our selves have not enough of Wisdom and Force to govern it: But he alone must guide it to its blessed End.

I ask'd her, *How I might accomplish my Penitence, and how I might put in practice this Resignation to God?*

She said; Sir, we must chuse no other Penance but that which God gives us. When we endure the Cold, and Heat, the Hunger, Thirst, Weariness, Infirmities, and Diseases, that it pleases God to send us, we must suffer them in the Spirit of Penitence; because all wou'd not come upon us if it were not for Penance for Sin: For before it nothing troubled

(f) *Matth 12. 36.* (g) *Matth. 10. 30.*

us. All our Miseries and Corruptions come by Sin, even the Vermine of our Body, the Lice, and all the other Beasts engendered by Corruption, are produc'd by Sin ; and therefore we must suffer them willingly, since this is the Penance which God has in Justice permitted to befall us instead of the Punishments due to our Sins. We ought not to invent Penances according to our Fancy, since God has enjoyn'd those which he thinks fit, that is, to gain our Bread with the Sweat of our Face (i) : so that all our Travels, Pains, and Labours, both of Body and Mind, are all satisfactory Penances enjoyn'd us by God himself : But the Penances chosen after our Fancy, are often invented by the Devil, who would thereby drive us headlong, or at least excite us to vain Glory ; because ordinarily those who fast or wear Sackcloth, are chagrin and presumptuous, believing themselves to be better than others, and that God is oblig'd to them for their good Works, as the *Pharisee* (k) who thanked God for his Righteousness. All this proceeds from Self-love : But true Penitence consists in taking patiently whatsoever God permits to befall us, either to our Body, Estate or Mind, and willingly to suffer it in the Spirit of Penitence, to satisfy for our Sins. This is the true Practice of the RESIGNATION of our Will to God : For every Moment there falls out Occasions of Suffering and Submission ; so that we need not seek for them. It is only necessary that we practise this Resignation of our Will to God for accomplishing the saving Penitence which he has enjoyn'd us, and for the Exercise of all sort of Vertues : For as soon as God shall be Master of our Will, he'll lead it to all good : so that we shall do no longer Evil, even in temporal things : For God will govern all with his Spirit of *Righteousness, Goodness and Truth*, which can never fail in any thing. *Righteousness* doing good to all and evil to none. *Truth* giving Light to discern all things and so to bring all to a good End. If you resolve, Sir, truly to resign your self to God, you shall enjoy all this Happiness ; but as long as you act by your own Will, you'll spoil all, and shall not be saved.

I said to her ; *That this Way was so streight, that one would be afraid to pass through it ; and that it would make one afraid that he could not be saved.*

(i) Gen 3. 16. (k) Luke 18. 11.

She said ; This Way is only a little streight at the Beginning ; but as soon as one has forc'd himself to depart from his own Will, 'tis then so large, free and pleasant, that there can be nothing more agreeable : For the Soul which has resign'd its Will to God, lives ^(l) like a Child, without Care : and tho' Heaven and Earth shou'd be overturned, she is still in Repose, and without Fear, knowing well that God who governs her, is able to preserve her through all : She seeks no longer after any thing, knowing well that her God will still provide for her ; ^(m) She has no more Desire after any thing ; for she finds in God a Satiety and perfect Satisfaction : She places her Hope no longer in any thing but the Promises of God. In short, Sir, this is a Life wholly delightful and pleasant, full of solid Contentment, which is not founded upon the Levity of Chances, or Changes of Men, but upon a permanent Stability : Whereas on the contrary, the Life of one who is governed after his own Will is very miserable, and he walks continually upon the Briars and Thorns with which it is sown : So that a Soul subject to its own Passions furnish him with a kind of Martyrdom. How many Vexations and Cares are there to satisfy this Self-will which often is unsatiable ? The more 'tis satisfied, the less 'tis contented. How often does our Self-will throw us into irreparable Mischiefs ? It's ignorant, inconstant, insolent, hasty and inclin'd to all sort of Evil ; so that he who follows it, is oblig'd to lead a miserable Life and to end it in an unhappy Death. It seems, Sir, you are, afraid yet of resigning your self to God, as if this Resignation were a streight Way, and troublesome Life ! when you see by so many Truths, that 'tis so sweet and agreeable : and on the contrary, that which seems so pleasant to you, is so painful and dangerous. All the Difficulty that you'll find to make this Resignation, is no other thing but a Shadow which appears something, and in Effect is nothing. As soon as you shall turn away your Eyes from your self, to look towards God, this Shadow of Apprehension will vanish, and you shall see it no more.

I said to her ; *That I was not so much afraid of resigning my self to God : For I wou'd willingly do it, but that in several Recounters she had given me Occasion to doubt of my Salvation.*

(l) Ps. 36. 37. 5. (m) Ps. 72. 73. 75.

She said ; Sir, do you love flattering Discourses more than the Truth ? If it be so, you may retire from me : For I am settled in the Truth, and I have no desire to depart from it. I can make no Reflection whether it pleases or displeases my Hearers ; but I am resolved still to observe it, tho' it wou'd cost me my Life : For he who forsakes the Truth, forsakes God, which I will never do. I love rather to lose the Favour of all the Men of the World, than to omit the Truth when I am oblig'd to speak it : But setting aside this Obligation, I can very well hold my Peace ; because Jesus Christ has said, *that Pearls should not be cast before Swine*. If the Truths that I have told you beget Scruple in you, 'tis a sign that you are not resolved to be sav'd : For otherwise you wou'd greatly rejoyce to understand the Truth. Those who are called (n) *Swine* in the Gospel, are Men who make a Dunghil of the Roses of true Vertue, or of the Pearls of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Those hidden Secrets are precious Stones ; and he makes a Dunghil of them who says that they are imaginary or contriv'd things, or Heresies. All these Sentiments make a Dunghil of the Pearls which are presented to them, and according to the Counsel of Jesus Christ, they ought not to be told to such, but to those who value them as they merit. And when you tell me that I give you occasion to doubt of your Salvation, by speaking of true and solid Vertue ; it seems you wou'd also make a Dunghil of its Roses. I have told you the Truth, *That no body shall be saved but he who of his free Resolution, resigns his Will to God's, and denys his own*. You need not therefore doubt of your Salvation, if so be you will do this, Sir ; but if you will not, doubt confidently of your Salvation : For you shall never obtain it. This Doubting is good if thereby you take a Resolution to search for the means of your Conversion : For (o) *the Fear of God is the Beginning of true Wisdom*. If you be not in Fear as to your Salvation, you will presume of it, and therefore will be sure of your Damnation : Because he who presumes to have it, uses no Endeavours to obtain it, but dies in a Sin against the Holy Ghost. Therefore it is a great Advantage that I have made you doubt of your Salvation, since this Doubt will certainly lead you to Salvation.

(n) *Matth. 7. 6.* (o) *Prov. 1. 7.*

I said to her ; *That I desired indeed to have the Fear of God, and of my Salvation ; but that I saw my self so far from this perfect Resignation, that it seem'd to me I could never attain to it.*

She said ; Sir, that is nothing but a panick Fear ; because there is no Ground to fear what we wou'd willingly do. If you have been resolv'd in it for so long a time past, suffer not the Devil to tempt you now : For there is no more Difficulty at present than the first Day you had the Will to do it. Be not carried away by imaginary things which are nothing but Amusements. Fix on the Reality of the thing. You perceive clearly that you have a Free-Will and Choice and that by this you act in all things. It is by it you go from one Place to another : It is it that desires to see and hear : It makes you covet or pretend to Wealth, Places, or Honours : It is it also that desires Pleasures and Prosperities : It is it likewise that wou'd rule over others, and cannot suffer from any : It is it that desires its Ease and Repose with many other things for our Advantage : It is always our self-will, that Works in us without ceasing. This being discovered, there is nothing more to be done, but to interdict and forbid it these Operations, to the end it may let God work (p) alone in us what it shall please him ; and then there will be nothing more to fear : For when we shall attain to this so much desired Resignation, there is nothing more to be feared : For God who will rule us, will give us all things. Does this seem difficult to you, Sir, that you doubt you cannot attain to it ? There is nothing to do here, but to cease : For God does then all in us. There is nothing necessary but to rest : For this Resignation consists not in Actions, but in Omissions. The Practice of it is so sweet that there's nothing more desirable. All consists in taking care not to let our own Will act : And so often as we perceive that it is inclin'd to any thing to Bridle it, and to say to it, *Cease ; for God only ought to move thee.* Is not this a sweet Exercise, upon which notwithstanding our Salvation depends ? For if it depended upon wearing Sackcloth, taking Discipline to our selves, Fasting, Watching, or other troublesome things, we wou'd have ground to say and to fear that we cou'd not attain to it : but when we must only resign our Will to God, no body can excuse himself, without Hazard of perishing.

The Twelfth Conference.

Of discerning the Motions of God from those of Nature, which must be done by Righteousness, Goodness and Truth, which are three divine Qualities, according to which, all our Motions and all our Actions ought be regulated with great Care.

I Ask'd her, how I might know when my own Will acted, that I might make it cease?

She said; Sir, as often as it is led to any thing that is evil, or very unprofitable, it is certainly always our self-will: Because God cannot encline it to such things: And when we seek our Honour, Pleasure or Profit, this also proceeds from our self-will: For God will never give any such Desires. Indeed he permits them sometimes to befall us; but he will never make us seek or desire them. Therefore if we have a serious Application of Spirit, we will remark presently if it be God or our self-will that acts in us: For God can never move it but to good, or necessary things; and will never make our Will act but what shall be for his Glory, or for the saving Good of our Neighbour. Nothing else can come from God, but from our self-will, which is wholly deprav'd, and ought never to do any thing for it self; for it spoils all. It were better to make it cease without any more ado than to let it act alone and without God: Because we presume often that we have done many good Works, which (a) will be found to be evil and condemned by God: because our self-will was corrupted from the Beginning of the World in Adam, and is yet more corrupted by our own actual Sins: so that it is not capable of moving it self but to Evil, and not at all to Good. This may be very easily observed: For we feel always in our selves some Inclination to do Evil: And

(a) Luk. 18. 14.

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if it were not restrain'd or bridled by Reason or Vertue, we wou'd do nothing without Sin, or which did not favour of its Corruption: For if we speak, it will be still with an Inclination to augment what is for our Liking or Advantage, or to excuse our Faults: so that naturally, we wou'd never abide in the streight Truth: And if we converse or do Business with our Neighbour, it will be still with a Spirit of Covetousness, either of Wealth, Honour or Pleasure: so that all our own Bents and Inclinations are carried always to Evil, unless we be habituated by Vertue or good Breeding, not to follow Lying, Rapine or Deceit, nor the Spirit of Covetousness.

I ask'd her, *By what means I might discover if it be God that moves my Will in all my daily Actions?*

She said; Sir, there are certain Marks whereby to know when these Motions come from God; because they are always accompanied with *Righteousness, Goodness and Truth*, which Qualities are still inseparable from God's Spirit.^(b) who never changes, but abides always righteous, good, and true; and therefore cannot move to any Actions, Words or Thoughts, but those which are accompanied with these three Conditions or Qualities. Therefore when we feel our selves moved to undertake any thing whatsoever, we must always bend our Mind to remark our Undertaking ere we begin it, and see if it respect the Glory of God, or the saving Good of our Neighbour: And if so, we may pursue our Undertaking; but by means that are just, good and true: For else we may be yet mistaken, thinking that it was for the Glory of God, and the Good of our Neighbour, when it was only our own Will and Inclination. For a Motion that comes from God, is still accompanied with Righteousness, Goodness and Truth; and if we must lye or be unjust, or hurt our Neighbour that we may attain to our Pretensions, however they may be good in themselves, yet nevertheless they are not of God. That we may follow the Motions of God, we must always observe this Rule, to remark in all our Actions, whether small or great, if they are accompanied with Righteousness, Goodness and Truth: And if all these together are not to be found in them, we must still reject them as evil things, and produc'd by our self-will: For God will never move to any

(b) Eph. 5. 9.

thing how small soever it be if it be not just, good and true. This is the true Touch-stone whereby to discover when Motions come from God : We need not consult Oracles, but examine well if our Works be disinterested from all our own Advantages, and if they be just, good and true.

I ask'd her, *If my self-will might not mingle with the Divine Motions ?*

She said ; Yes, Sir, our self-will does very readily mingle with the Motions from God. By this many Saints have committed great Faults. This falls out when we are not wholly disengaged from our selves, and Nature does yet live with Grace : Notwithstanding it is easie to discover it when we are not precipitate in any thing, and when we take time to examine narrowly what we do, to see if it be just, and good and true. Then there's nothing to be fear'd whether our own will mingle there or not. It's God always is just, good and true. Our Nature being transform'd in him, does the same Functions of Righteousness, Goodness and Truth. Therefore St. Paul said, *(c)* *It is no longer I that live, but Jesus Christ lives in me :* because the Soul which is resigned to God, does so habituate it self to his Will, that it always becomes one *(d)* and the same thing with it : so that its own Will, being purged from it self, moves no longer but by God : So that the Motions of the Soul and those of God become the same thing, and they can no longer be distinguished ; because the Soul cannot now do any thing but what is just, good and true, unless it should depart from its Union with God, and during this Straying should follow its own Will : In this case it may do amiss, and not otherwise : But for you, Sir, you are not yet habituated to this Union ; examine still whether what you think, speak or do, be just, good and true. With this you cannot be mistaken, even tho' your own Inclination shou'd incite you to do things which have those three Qualities of God : They are always of him, tho' the Devil himself shou'd move them ; because there is nothing just, good and true which is not of God ; because he only is just, only good and only true : And by these Marks you will certainly discern your own Motions from those of God ; and even tho' they were but mingled with them, there wou'd still be something evil, or unjust, or untrue, and then you must purge your Works from this Malignity, or else omit them altogether.

(c) Gal. 2. 20. *(d)* 1 Cor. 6. 17.

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I told her, *That I had yet one Doubt ; that is, whether I ought to do or omit the Works in which I perceived not precisely these three Qualities, of Righteousness, Goodness and Truth ; whether the Works were indifferent or necessary, or out of Complaisance.*

She said ; Sir, you ought to do all necessary Works when they cannot be easily done by others ; And for those which are indifferent, to do them, is but to lose time. They must either be unprofitable or have some end. If this end does not respect the Glory of God, take good heed of mis-spending time, which is so precious. Never be persuaded of this Indifference ; because under that Name we often do evil things without being aware of it. We can never do indifferent things, except very subtilly, before we reflect upon what we are doing : For otherwise all our Actions, how small soever they be, have some Scope at which they aim : And as for Works of Complaisance, they are forbidden by Jesus Christ, when he says, (e) that he who seeks to please Men, is not the Servant of Jesus Christ, unless your Complaisance aim at some good or necessary End : Otherwise every Deed of Complaisance is vain and evil. Resolve, Sir, to do those things only, which have the Righteousness, Goodness and Truth of God : For all others are to be suspected, and bring no Glory to God, nor saving Good to our Neighbour ; and seeing you would follow Jesus Christ (f) seek those things which are above, and not those which are upon the Earth, which must very quickly perish. It is better (g) to lay up Treasures for Heaven, where the Rust does not corrupt : For tho' you should gain herethe Friendship of all the Men of the World by your Works of Complaisance, they cannot give you any thing. One Degree of the Glory of God is of more worth than ten thousand Worlds. Endeavour, Sir, to labour for this, or be still. Make no more fruitless Labour : For all that is not of God, is nothing, and God alone is all permanent Good.

I said to her ; That I had not made this serious Reflection to remark if all my Actions were accompanied with Righteousness, Goodness and Truth, but that I did them often without thinking on any thing, if I did not remark in them any of my own Wickedness.

(e) Gal. 1. 10. (f) Col. 3. 1, 2. (g) Matth. 6. 20.

She said ; Sir, you do therefore commit many Faults, both in respect of this present World, and that to come. For by proceeding inconsiderately, it is certain you act only according to the Motions of Nature, which being corrupted, can do nothing that's good. After this manner, your good Actions are but humane, and will end with you : this is a very prejudicial Ignorance not to know that all the Works which we do naturally, shall not be rewarded before God, and that all their Reward is received in this World. Many Persons have done many such good Works who notwithstanding shall never be fav'd: And even tho' they shou'd^(b) suffer Martyrdom by natural Motions, this wou'd profit them nothing ; because to partake of Eternal Life, all must have the Righteousness of God : For finite things cannot come to be infinite. Now all our Works which do not partake of God, are finite, and cannot reach Eternity ; because they have not these Eternal Ends, but Natural or Temporal ones. In this many do greatly deceivethemselves, looking for Salvation by Works simply Humane or Natural, believing that all Works are good when they are not accompanied with our designed Malice. It's thus before Men who judge only according to the Reach of their short Sight : But the clear-seeing Eyes of God do judge according to Eternal Truth and Righteousness. Therefore we must endeavour to do our Actions according to these, else we shall remain empty-handed at Death. It's not enough that we cease to do evil : we must also do well, or otherwise we shall fall into the Sin against the Holy Ghost, which is a Presumption of being saved without good Works ; and none can be called good, if they bear not the *Righteousness, Goodness and Truth* of God. His Righteousness does every just thing, both as to our selves and our Neighbour. His Goodness does good to all and evil to none. His Truth is always streight and single ; and when our Actions are not accompanied with these three Conditions, they don't proceed from God but from our Nature, or the Suggestions of the Devil, who willingly covers his most subtil Temptations with seeming Good that he may make every one believe they shall be saved without good Works, by making them esteem their Natural and Temporary Works to be good.

(b) 1 Cor. 13. 3.

I said to her ; I should have great Difficulty to apply my self so as to remark always whether my Actions had these three Qualities, and if they were only divine Motions.

She said ; Sir, if you do not this, you'll lose all your Reward, and will also occasion the Damnation of many others, while you think you are doing good Works. For Example ; you see some one in Want : Your Nature is mov'd with Compassion towards him: Without more Reflection you give him of your Goods, either what is superfluous, or even what you need your self ; and you believe you do a Work of Charity. Nevertheless it may be ill done : For if you don't consider from whence the Poverty of that Man proceeds, you'll often occasion his Condemnation : For your Gifts may serve him for means to offend God ; as, if he be enclined to drink, your Alms will lead him to new Acts of Drunkenness ; or if he have a proud and haughty Heart, by your Gift he'll be the more puffed up, employing it upon sumptuous Apparel or other Vanities to nourish his Pride and his Boasting, or to commit other Excesses to which he's addicted, of Luxury, Arrogance or Contempt of his Equals. In short, this Good that you think you have done him, will often occasion divers sort of Evils to this your Neighbour, and also to your self, in case you have need of what you have given him : For *Charity* well order'd begins always at ones self ; and he who should give his Goods to another, and leave his own Debts unpaid, wou'd commit Robbery, by taking from him to whom 'tis due, to give it to another out of tender Compassion. Therefore I say we must always observe whether our Works be accompanied with Righteousness, remarking whether this necessitous Person wou'd do any saving Good with our Gifts, whether they would draw him out of spiritual and bodily Miseries, whether he shall not abuse them by employing them to do evil : Then the Giving him will be accompanied with the Righteousness of God, provided you have what is superfluous to give him : But when you have only pure Necessaries, 'tis not just to give them to others unless they be in some Extremity of Want : Then you must succour your Neighbour as much as you are able, yet without casting your self into the Extremity from whence you wou'd bring another : For this wou'd neither be just nor good : For a Man shou'd never ruine himself voluntarily : This is to do an ill thing and against the Goodness of God. To do therefore a Work of *Charity* that has the Righteousness, Goodness and Truth of God stamp'd upon it, we must first see if it be true

that

that the Person whom we would assist is really poor: This is the Truth of God: For there are now so many Cheats and Lyes, that the most part of the Poor are so thro their own Fault; because they will not work or they are prodigal and Cheats, or they will not manage, but are careless of the Goods that God has bestowed on them. In all these Cases the Person is not truly poor; and therefore we cannot find the Truth of God in our Alms, neither can we therein find his Goodness; because it would be ill for the Salvation of him to whom we give it: Neither would it have his Righteousness; for it would not be just to feed by Alms any in their Sloth, or in other Sins of Gluttony or Carelessness. You see clearly, Sir, that it is necessary to remark always by what Spirit we do our Actions; or else we shall commit great Faults without perceiving them. If you find some Difficulty in this serious Reflection, yet this should not make you omit it: For our Salvation, and that of our Neighbour does well deserve all this Trouble. If so many Men of Wit and Quality do so earnestly study to render themselves honest, civil and accomplish'd in the Eyes and Judgment of Men, how much more ought you to do to render your self such in the Sight of God. This Difficulty will be well rewarded by your Salvation, and that of so many others: Whereas these Persons are often obliged to bow their Wills as Reeds at the Will of those whom they honour; who nevertheless can give them nothing but perishing Things, either some Breath of Honour or transient Pleasures, or some Riches that perish by a Turn of Fortune; and yet for this they force and torment themselves exceedingly. Sir, let other Mens Folly make you wise. Study as much to gain the Favour of God as they do to have that of Men; For your eternal Happiness depends upon it. You can never follow God if you do not embrace his Truth. Without it all your Works are vain and temporal, ending with your self.

I told her, that I would absolutely study from henceforth to become agreeable to God, but that I never yet had Light enough to discern in all my Actions, whether the Righteousness, Goodness and Truth of God was to be found in them.

She said; Sir, this comes from no other thing but Inconsideration of Mind: For if it would apply it self, it would certainly know all that it ought to do and omit, more clearly than your Eyes perceive sensible Objects. Apply only the Understanding that God has given you for the Perfection of your Soul, and you shall learn all things. As soon as
you

you (i) shall firmly resolve to seek no longer for any thing upon Earth, but only to seek the Glory of God, you shall obtain the Light of the Holy Spirit which will teach you all things. There is nothing to be feared on this Occasion but the Band that we have to the Earth, which if we follow, we should soon lose the Star which should guide us to the Place where God dwells. Therefore I exhort you never more to look behind you, nor to aim at any thing on Earth: For all that we can see or hope for here, are but Chains and Bands to withdraw us from God, our alone Saviour: Therefore, Sir, forsake your self and all things: For they are Enemies of your true Good. The Love we bear to Men, hinders us from the Love of God, and the Love of our selves renders us his Enemies; which Things stifle in our Soul the Light of the Holy Spirit. But if we are resolved to seek and love no longer any thing but the Glory of God, we shall soon perceive, if what we speak, think or do, be for this Glory or not, by the least Diligence or Care to do it. Only you must be firm in your Resolution, that you will do nothing but what shall be for this Glory, and thrust far from you all other things as unworthy of your Pretensions. Then shall we walk with a steady Pace, and shall no longer do any thing but what shall have these three Qualities of the Righteousness, Goodness and Truth of God: For all that is for his Glory, brings still these Conditions along with it his Glory being inseparable from his Essence, his Essence from his Righteousness, Goodness and Truth, nothing can be wanting there any longer.

(i) John 7. 17. (k) Jam. 4. 4.

I have told you, and give Credit to nothing but the Truth of the Holy Scriptures. G 22

The Thirteenth Conference.

That Persons illuminated by God, may serve as powerful Means for Salvation; but it's God only who can give it; and that now the Company of Men is dangerous.

I Said to her; That all these things were true; but that my Soul was not yet purified enough to discover them so precisely and that her Company was necessary for me that I might learn to practise that Righteousness Goodness and Truth.

She said; Sir, I believe indeed my Company may serve you as a Mean to preserve you on Occasions; but it is not necessary for this: For God alone is sufficient (a) who'll guide you thro' all, provided you continue firmly faithful to him: For you know not me yet; and if you knew me, you would see in my Practice all the things that I tell you by Word. My Thoughts, Words and Deeds, must have the three Qualities of which I have spoken to you; else I should be like the Brass that sounds outwards, and has nothing within it self. I have remarked that you have not yet discovered these Truths; and therefore my Conversation would be useless to you, and a great Hindrance to me: For you not perceiving God in my Words and Works, would not follow them, and you would hinder me from hearing God perfectly. It is true, you do me no hurt when you look upon my Actions as Humane; but you cannot profit by them. It were much better that you sought God purely, and leave me alone to enjoy him more particularly: Because the least Unprofitableness does always darken the Soul. I have spoken to you of many different Things which may give you Light into the Secrets of God and your own Salvation and particular Perfection. There remains only to put them in Practice. Read the Holy Scriptures, they will confirm you in all that I have told you, and give Credit to nothing but the Truth

of the Gospel, be he who he will that speaks to you. * For all Men are Lyars : And if I shou'd say things contrary to the Gospel, do not believe me : For you ought not to believe any thing because I say it to you, but only because it is really true : And if you knew me, you should also know God ; because (b) he is one and the same Spirit in all things. So far as you shall discern Righteousness, Goodness and Truth in any Person, so far shall you discern God living in them, and no farther. So that it's never good to follow Persons for themselves, but to follow the *Righteousness, Goodness and Truth* which you shall discover to abide in them. Therefore it's not needful to have their bodily Presence, it's enough to accompany them with Spirit and Will in their Righteousness.

I said to her, *That she ought not to deprive me of her Company, since it gave me so much Light and good Purposes, and that I heard her Discourses as proceeding from the Holy Spirit ; but that I had not as yet strength enough to put them in Practice : that I would be constrained to accompany some other Person ; because I could not stay alone.*

She said ; Sir, if you do this you are undone : For now you'll meet with no body in the World that possesses these three Qualities of *Righteousness, Goodness and Truth* ; and consequently you seek in vain among Men what you will certainly find with God, from whom Men will divert you, and fill your Mind with their own Idea's and Imaginations, enticing you to follow them. Tho' they are not in the Truth, yet they think they are, and willingly draw over every one to their Errours, while they even believe they are doing well. Be on your Guard, Sir, for we are fallen into the dangerous Times foretold by Jesus Christ, wherein (c) *Many false Prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.* Obey these Warnings, and let not your self be deceived : For many come in the Name of Jesus Christ, who are in League with Satan, and do deceive many. Remember still that we live now in the Reign of Antichrist, and that God (d) at his Coming finds no more Faith in *Israel*, that is, among his People ; For all have denied him. Faith consists in the Belief of the Promises and Word of God. Who is there now a-days that hears his Word, and acts according to it ? The

* Ps. 116. 11. (b) 1 Cor. 6. 17. (c) Matth. 24. 11. (d) Luke 18. 8.

Christians are the People of God, nevertheless none of them has Faith: For if they did believe in one only God, they would not make so many Idols, that each one has his particular Idol; One makes an Idol of his Wealth, another of his Honour, another of his Wisdom, and so of all other things, which they adore and esteem. So that none has any longer Faith to believe that there is but one only true God, whom we ought to worship, nor yet the other things which God taught us by his holy Prophets, his Apostles and Jesus Christ himself. The Church has no longer Faith to believe that all these things must be practised in order to Salvation. These seem to be but Stories of the ancient Times, and that it is not necessary now to put them in Practice: So that the word is now fulfilled, which says that when the Lord shall come, he shall not find Faith in Israel. He is come and he finds no Faith in his People. Therefore, take good heed, Sir, of applying to any body; because there is no Faith now among Christians, but many Deceivers and Seducers. Continue rather alone, or follow me yet a little.

The Fourteenth Conference.

That the Habit does not make the Monk, and that Religions of themselves make none holy. Of the Corruption of them and of the Church.

I Asked her, How it was possible that there should be no longer Faith in Israel, and yet so great a Number profess the true Faith, and in particular, so many devote themselves to God in Cloisters and Monasteries, that they may the better observe the Word of God, and the Doctrine of Jesus Christ.

She said; It's true, Sir, a great many profess to be Christians, but notwithstanding they are not so. While you conversed in the World, did you observe any that followed the Doctrine of Jesus Christ that denied himself, that chose the last Place or the least when he might have a better, and so many other things taught and observed by Jesus Christ? I know indeed you will answer me, No: And I ask you if there can be other Christians than those which follow his Doctrine?

ctrine? They call none a Calvinist but he who follows the Doctrine of Calvin; nor a Lutheran but he who follows the Doctrine of Luther: And why would they reckon those (a) to be Christians who don't follow the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. They bear the Title falsely, and they lye to the Holy Ghost: For they are not Christians before God, if they do not observe the Doctrine of the Gospel. They but flatter themselves to believe it, and deceive themselves to doubt it. Do you need any other Evidence, Sir, than your own Understanding, which sees and comprehends clearly enough that these who are now called Christians do not follow Jesus Christ, neither in his Doctrine nor in his Works, and that they are not Christians but in Word and in Picture having nothing of true Christianity, neither following Christ at a distance, nor near at hand? On the contrary, their Lives and Manners are directly opposite to the Life and Manners which Jesus Christ laid before us for an Example, when he lived upon Earth. Nevertheless you ask me if it be possible to believe that there is no longer Faith in Israel: And I ask How is it possible to believe that there are yet Christians upon Earth?

I said to her; That they who retire from the World to become Religious or enter into Cloysters, ought precisely to follow Jesus Christ; since they make solemn and particular Vows. *She said*; Sir, do you not see that these Vows are not well observ'd? They vow Chastity, Poverty and Obedience. Remark if this be observed in the Cloysters or among the Monks. These are only outward things which seem as little obligatory as Baptism seems: For neither the one nor the other is observed; and after the outward Ceremonies are performed, they do not think any longer on the Promises they've made to God: Every one lives according to his Inclinations. Religious Vows are as it were a second Baptism, or a Confirmation of it; because they enter into a Religious Life: that they may renounce the World, its Roms and Vanities as they had promised in Baptism: And when they have taken the Habit, and made Vows, they love the World more than they did before. There is often greater Pomp and Vanity under the mean Habit of a Religious Person than under the Purple of a King. Who does not perceive the Heart of those Persons puffed up, because they have the

(a) 2 John 9.

Name of Saints or vertuous Ones? It seems all the World shou'd do them Honour and Reverence; because of their mean Habits which People kiss kneeling, with more Reverence than they worship God. They get the Titles of Venerable, Reverences, most illustrious. In short, Sir, it cannot be true that these Persons have renounced the World, since they desire to be lov'd, honour'd and esteem'd by it. On the contrary, in their Religious State they do often require more worldly Honour than wou'd have belonged to them, if they had remained Seculars. Does it not hereby appear that there are no where any true Christians, and that all Christianity now consists only in outward *Idea's*? For no body renounces the Devil, the World and its Poms, tho' all have promised it in Baptism: And tho' they have confirmed these Promises by Religious Vows, yet they are not more careful of one Obligation than the other. This may be concluded even from the Deeds and Practices of all those Religious Voraries.

I said to her; *That at least, the Religious did follow Jesus Christ at a distance.*

She said; She knew not one thing in which they follow'd Jesus Christ: For all their Practices were contrary to him: For he said, *(b)* *Learn of me who am meek and lowly in Heart;* and these are proud and arrogant. He was poor throughout his whole Life, and these desire to be rich. He had not where to lay his Head, whereas these have all sorts of Conveniences, building Houses as if they were to dwell here for ever. Jesus Christ did still labour, sweat, toil and suffer in this Life; whereas these Monks will live at ease, without labouring or suffering any thing. Jesus Christ chose Reproach, Contempt and Confusion; whereas these make themselves to be honour'd by all, taking to themselves the first Place, chusing still the finest and the best: whereas Jesus Christ did always chuse the least, tho' he was the Lord and Creator of all things. He chose a poor Mother, Apostles from among the Common People, a Stable to be born in, and a Gibbet to die upon. Do you think, Sir, that there is any Resemblance between the Life of the Monks and that which Jesus Christ taught us by his Example? For my part I can't perceive any thing in which they follow Jesus Christ, neither closely nor at a distance: For even all their Outside is

(b) *Matth. 11, 29,*

directly contrary to him. The pompous Ornaments of their Houses and Churches do shew the Vanity of their Hearts; For he who is not vain, seeks nothing but what is necessary. These Superfluities are real Evidences of it; For he who is not luxurious (or loves not Luxuries) will never heap up Treasures upon Earth. All that Gold, Silver, Silk and those other Ornaments, are all worldly Poms which they renounced in Baptism, and since in making Religious Vows. Nevertheless every one endeavours to heap up more. Is not this to mock God, to make false Promises to him, which we have no Mind to keep? For those who at present enter into a Religious Life, have no Design to follow Jesus Christ; But on the contrary, many enter therein, that they may be provided and have their Conveniencies and Pleasures, or that they may be free of the Cares and Troubles of maintaining their Families if they shou'd live in the World, or for some Reasons which are for their Profit: All which nevertheless are covered with a Pretence of following Jesus Christ, tho' they will or desire nothing less than this.

I said to her; *That some of them did sincerely enter into a Religious state; being persuaded that hereby they shall more really imitate Jesus Christ.*

She said; I bewail these, Sir, who go thither upon so good Designs; because they cannot put them in Execution in these Societies at present, who are established more for their own Profit than according to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. How many have entered into them who have been disinterested from worldly things, and they have learned them to covet and seek them? If a Monk know not the way to bring the Water to their Mill, they will cast him off as unprofitable for the Good of Religion. So that to observe his Vows aright, he must study to be covetous rather than poor. I doubt not but there are yet several particular Persons among the Religious Orders who have a sincere Intention to please God; but they are so blinded with the Reasons and Arguments of others that they follow their Vices insensibly, without perceiving it, because these Vices are changed as to their Name, and they call them Vertues: For the *Pride*, *Luxury* and *Avarice* of these Persons are called by the Name of *Charity*. Their Hearts will be full of these three Vices; and to make them pass with others for Vertues, they will persuade them that they ought to procure to themselves, Honour, as being the Servants of God, or Priests consecrated to him; and that therefore all Honour is due to them, that God may be honour'd

honour'd by them. Those well-meaning Persons believe this to be true, and follow others blindly, without reflecting upon the Behaviour of Jesus Christ, his Apostles and Disciples, who were despised by the World. For Jesus Christ says that he is (c) *the Reproach of Men*; and when they would have honour'd the Apostles for the great Miracles they wrought upon the Sick, they said, (d) *See that you do it not for we are Men like to yourselves; we do these Wonders in the Name of Jesus Christ, who ought to be honoured and glorified, and not we who can do nothing.* Now these at present ascribe all Honour to themselves, making the World believe that it is Charity to give them Goods wherewith to maintain their Luxury, as well in their Movables and Buildings as in the Ornaments of the Altars under Colour, that 'tis the House of God which deserves all good and fine things, as if God were honoured by their Luxury and Superfluities, which are so well masqu'd that the most Pious follow them without considering that neither Jesus Christ nor his Apostles did ever build magnificent Temples or Houses, but followed a plain Simplicity. Can God be honoured by the Sins of Luxury and Excess? He who being in the World did chuse Poverty and Misery! Thus he would be indeed a changing God if he should now glory in the Magnificence of Temples, Houses and Ornaments, who would neither have the one nor the other, tho' he was Lord and Creator of all things. If the Glory of his Father had consisted in Churches and sumptuous Ornaments, would not he to whom all appertains, have pitch'd upon them and built them? What Dorages do Men now publish, that God is honoured by great Buildings and rich Ornaments! So our Dung should be his Honour: For (e) all that is fair and good in the Sight of Men is nothing but Dung before God. We have renounced the Poms of the World that we might become the Children of God; and by the same Poms we would honour him in his Churches! It is not fit to renounce the Poms of the World to become Christians, since these give Glory to God. It had been better to encrease these, since they honour God, than by the Encrease of them, God might receive Encrease of Glory. What Blindness of Mind is it, Sir, that makes Men believe that God is honoured by worldly Poms when they are applied to

(c) Ps. 22. 7. (d) Acts 3. 12, 16. 10. 26. 14. 15. Ps. 115.
 (e) Luke 18. 15.

Church-Walls. If they displease God in the Souls of Christians, how much more should they displease him in Churches and Places that are peculiarly dedicated unto him for Prayer, since this does still require Attention, and these pompous and magnificent Ornaments serve for nothing but to distract and divert the Mind by regarding these Poms and Ornaments of Churches which do certainly distract the Mind of all those who regard them, and can serve for nothing but to satisfy the Avarice of those who covet them. Nevertheless they call those charitable who afford them Money wherewith to provide all these Poms and Ornaments of Churches. Every one praises and esteems them, as if God were a vain God, who would be adorn'd with fine Garments. If he would have a rich Temple in Solomon's time, it was because People were then so gross, that they could comprehend nothing of God or of his Majesty, but by gross and material things. But now that we have the Doctrine of Jesus Christ we have received Light enough to know that God (f) is a Spirit and Life, and not bodily or material. So that they who go to Cloysters or Religious Orders that they may follow Jesus, are greatly deceived; because there He is not at all followed, but opposed: For which they ought rather to be called the Cloysters of Antichrist than of Christ; because the things wherein they contradict him are more than those wherein they follow him.

I ask'd *If those would not be saved who should enter into a Religious State with a good Intention, and being in it should endeavour to live well according to their Language.*

She said; Sir, these are all Impostors in the Sight of God: For they promise Poverty and they observe it not; because they yet covet worldly Goods, and do all they can to please Men, that they may give them of their Goods. These Vows oblige them not to desire Riches, and they do their best to have them. If they cannot desire them, much less can they possess or receive them. They vow Chastity also and very often they are content only by Force, and for want of Occasions. God who tries (g) the Reins, sees well if their Hearts and their Thoughts are chaste, since so many things contrary thereto are heard of them. They vow Obedience, and they are full of self-will. So far are they from obeying God, that they do not so much as hearken to him, and are subject only to their own Wills and Desires, without any

other Submission. By what means would you have these Persons saved who falsifie their Faith to God since those cannot be sav'd who falsifie their Faith to Men? Some falsifie their Faith to God out of Malice and Hypocrisie, and others falsifie it out of Ignorance, being directed in their Faith more according to what others do perswade them, than according to their real Practice. They make them believe that Poverty is observed when they possess nothing in particular, and in the mean time since the Kings and the great Men of the World do ordinarily profess nothing in particular having People and Officers under them who govern their Revenues: Even as these Voraries of Poverty have, who wou'd not by it be depriv'd of a Glass of Wine or any the least thing. They are in this more happy than secular Persons, who are oblig'd to care and labour for necessary things; whereas these *Monks* have all at their Wish without Pain or Labour; and if they be depriv'd of a Wife, they are free also of the Labours which Marriage brings along with it: So that their Chastity is more sensual than the being joyned with some Person of a froward or contrary Humour, which is more irksome than Continence: So that these *Monks* who are called Penitents, do far less of Penitence in their Monasteries than they wou'd do if they were out of them: For their Vows of Obedience do constrain them only to what they have a Mind to do. They have no sooner pass'd their *Novitiate* but they are absolute Lords, and taking the Will of their Superiours for that of God, they make them easily to condescend to theirs, else they wou'd become rebellious and chagrin or Disturbers of others: And nevertheless they will think they have kept their three Vows, and believe that for this Cause they shall go to Paradise, tho' indeed all their Vertues be nothing but imaginay ones or Apish Tricks: And tho' they shou'd live well according to their Knowledge, yet they perish; because Ignorance does not excuse Sin. To be saved, we must of Necessity have the *Righteousness, Goodness and Truth* of God; these for the most part have none of these Vertues: For that cannot be true Righteousness, to quit their own Wealth to go afterwards and beg that of others, who very often have need of it themselves, and yet dare not refuse these whom they esteem to be the Servants of God: neither is it just to live upon Alms, when the Body and Mind is sound for Labour, neither is it just to leave their own Goods to their Kinsmen to enrich them, and they themselves go live at the Charge of a Common-Wealth. For my part, Sir, I perceive in my interiour that all these things

things are Unrighteousnesses before God however they cover them with Perfections and Vertues : Neither do I see the *Goodness* of God reign in these Souls ; because its Property is to do good to all, and to do evil to none : But we see these Religious Persons do good only to themselves or those who are associated with them, studying to do Mischief to all those who will not follow them. And as for the *Truth* of God, it is yet less observed by them than the two other Vertues : For all their Works are nothing but external, far from the real Truth of God, which appears always to be what it is, and these *Monks* make a shew of the Holiness and Vertues which they do not possess, but are truly Hypocrites.

I said to her ; That many of these Monks were Saints, and did Miracles.

She said ; They became not Saints, Sir, by that manner of Life which is observed now in the Cloysters. They must either have been Saints before they entered there, or being there, they must have resigned themselves to the Will of God, and followed the Holy Spirit ; and if so, they might be holy in any Place, and in any State and Condition, and not in the Cloyster only ; but these *Monks* extol their Sanctity for their Honour and Profit, attributing it to the Perfection of their Rules, tho' these have often prov'd Hindrances to those who were guided by the Holy Spirit, who is always without Constraint, whereas these Rules do fetter and bind Souls with so many Chains, that they are more chain'd than Slaves in the Gallies. This cannot but bring great Disturbance to truly Christian Souls, whom these Constraints do not render holy, but the Conformity of their Will to that of God ; because there can be no Holiness but what is derived from him, and therefore no Saints, but according as they partake of his *Holiness, Righteousness, Goodness* and *Truth*, from which Mens Practices are very remote ; and if Men were not sitting in greater Darkness than that of *Egypt* of old was, they wou'd not reverence the *Monks* to day, because there were Saints among them formerly : Since their Lives were wholly different from the Lives which the *Monks* lead now ; and if they observe narrowly the Histories which they themselves write of them, they will find them a Reproof to them in every thing. For they write that those *Holy Monks* did greatly despise the World, and these at present do love and seek it ; that those lov'd Poverty, whereas these love and seek for Riches : The first were humble and despised, and these are self-conceited, and will be honour'd. Read, Sir, if you please, the Lives of all the *Holy Monks*, you will find them

them wholly contrary to what we see at present. So that what ought to raise their Esteem, confounds them.

I said to her; *That Saints had instituted these Orders and Rules; and therefore they must be good.*

She said; Sir, if these Orders and Rules had remained in the State in which their first Founders established them, they might have been helpful for Sinners who wou'd reform their Vices; because when Nature is left to its own Freedom, it contracts such evil Habits, as that it cannot afterwards be delivered from them but by Rigour and Constraint. This is the Reason that mov'd those first Founders to observe bodily Mortifications and Austerities; because the World was so addicted to all sorts of Sensualities, that Men almost thought of nothing else but their bodily Ease and Pleasures: To remedy which, these Lovers of Souls, introduc'd Ways of living that might resist such inveterate Vices, appointed Fastings to ^(b)subdue the Body, Watchings ⁽ⁱ⁾to attend upon Prayer, bodily Severities to resist Lust, and so of all the other Means that were proper to withdraw Men from the Vices to which they were habituated. All these things cannot be evil provided they be observed in the Spirit and Intention with which they were established, because they may serve as powerful Helps for Sinners who desire to be converted; but every one has no need of these Means to be holy; because they cannot give Holiness, but serve only to correct the Vices that might make the Soul still cleave to bodily Sensualities, and shou'd hinder the Resignation they shou'd make of themselves to be dispos'd of by God. But to believe that these Austerities can of themselves render us holy, is a great Error: For even the Devil might observe them, and continue a Devil still: So also wicked Men may become Religious, and observe their Rules, and yet not change their Affection to their Vices: since the same Means which might deliver them from them, may plunge them farther into them, as we see by Experience that they will sometimes study more Sensuality when they eat but Fish and Pulse, than they wou'd do in eating Partridges and other good things, and will have more Vanity in wearing a coarse Habit, than in Silk and Purple: We may also meet with more Avarice in a poor Man than in one who abounds in Wealth: Therefore we can't judge the Virtue of the Soul by outward Exercises, since both a good and ill Use may be made of them.

(b) 1 Cor. 9. 27. (i) Matth. 26. 41.

I said to her ; That Vows and the constraint Rules were Powerful Helps to regulate ones Life, and that the Cloysters cut off many Occasions of offending God, being out of the Hurry of the World.

She said ; Truly, Sir, I cannot believe that that Constraint of Vows and Rules have been established by the Holy Spirit : because it is contrary to the Free-Will that God has so bountifully given us. The same Spirit cannot (k) give and take back the same thing. He shou'd be subject to the Passion of changing as we are, which cannot be in God. He cannot hold that to be evil which he has once approv'd as good. The greatest Favour which ever he bestowed on Man, is the having given him his Free-Will, which renders him a depending Deity, and capable of conversing with God as with his like ; because he is pleased to make a Creature of such a Nature, that it shou'd have this Free-Will to all Eternity : And how is it possible that the same God shou'd change his eternal Designs, and shou'd inspire the Saints to curb Men, and to deprive them of this same Liberty where-with, when he created them, he wou'd endue them, to oblige them afterwards by Vows to follow or love him ? If God had these Designs, no body shou'd be damn'd ; because the Goodness of God is so great, that it wou'd by force constrain all Men to be saved. No, no, Sir, this cannot be true : God can bind no body to Vows. This must be the Invention of Men, who having a good Will and Desire that many shou'd be saved, thought it was good to constrain them by Vows and Ties, that they might be bound to continue in pious Exercises. This can come only from humane Prudence, and not from the Holy Spirit, tho' the Founders of Orders instituted it, or the Church after them found it expedient by Vows to oblige the Religious, that thereby they might be preserved in their first Resolution of serving God. This cannot at all proceed from the Holy Spirit, who will never act contrary to himself. And to know whether Vows and Constraints were powerful enough Means for the well ordering of Mens Lives that they might cease to offend God, and live as true Christians, we need only come to experience, which is still the Mistress of all Sciences. How many thousand Persons in Christendom are now under Vows in Cloysters and Religious Orders, and how

(k) Rom. 11. 29.

few of them are there who do Miracles? If these Vows and Rules came from the holy Spirit, they would certainly beall Saints: For the observing the Commands of the Holy Spirit, does still produce Holiness: so that all who wou'd be subject to the Vows which the Holy Spirit shou'd dictate to them, wou'd receive all the Fruits and Gifts, which are not to be found among the Votaries in Cloysters: On the contrary, we see they are rather guilty of six Sins against the same Holy Spirit, which are so ordinary in these Votaries, that it may be said, they are inseparable from them: For we find in them always a Presumption of being saved without good Works; because being full of self-love, they can never be good. They oppose also the known Truth, because the real Truth reproves them: Therefore they will not hearken to it, chusing rather to perish in their Darkness, and to lay the Stress of their Salvation upon the Opinion or Discourse of Men. So that we need not enter into Monasteries to discover clearly that they are not become Saints by their Vows and the Constraint of their Rules, nor yet have quitted all Commerce with Men, since we see they desire as much their Conversation as secular Persons do. And what will it serve for the Perfection of Souls, to have their Wills bound by Vows, and even their Bodies shut fast up, when the Spirit is yet curious to know what passes in the World, as the Practice is in the enclosed Cloysters? For if one would learn all sort of News, he may go into one of their Parlours; and if our Will were bound to God when it is bound to the Will of Men, there wou'd not be such Contradictions in the Cloysters, where as many Persons as there are, there are almost as many contrary Wills. All this does sufficiently make appear that the Rules and Vows do not make the Person holy, or depending upon the Will of God: On the contrary, they rather estrange him from it: For as soon as they have fulfill'd their Obedience to their Superior, they believe they have wholly satisfied God; whereas very often they offend him: for these Superiours are often estranged from the Spirit of God, neither is it to be accounted a great Vertue that we acquiesce in the Will of some Person whom we love. This is purely natural, and not from the Holy Spirit.

I said to her; That we have sometimes heard that Miracles have been wrought by this Obedience to Men. She

She said ; Sir, these cannot have been true Miracles if they had their Rise from Obedience to Men. There are so many things to be distinguished in the matter of Miracles, that the Devil may easily work such as the World wou'd admire : And I believe he has already deceived many pious Persons by false Miracles : For he can dazle Mens Spirits, and make them take nothing for something. He can also trouble the Humours of the Body and cause Diseases, which he can afterwards remove ; because it is done by Charms, and by the same Charms it may be undone again : Besides that, he has so many who are bound to him by precise Covenant, who do his Will, by whom he can work many Malefices which might seem real Miracles, tho' they be only all Tricks of the Devil. Therefore I will not believe that those Stories which they tell us of Miracles fallen out by this Obedience to Men, are true, nevertheless I do not reject the Approbation that God has sometimes given of the Submission rendered to his Servants, who possess his Spirit, and spread it by teaching it to others, in obeying of whom, they obey God himself ; because they are not moved but by him : So that those who obey them, do indirectly obey God. In this manner I believe that God may work true Miracles to confirm that it was his true Spirit which dwelt in these Superiours : As he wrought Miracles to confirm that the Apostles did possess his Spirit, because he did not remain in the Flesh to converse with Men and teach them. He taught them by his Servants : Therefore he said (1) *He that hears you, hears me* : But he says not this to all bodily Superiours, as it is now taken ; because it is to be feared, that many of these do directly follow the Devil's Will, and consequently teach others to do the same, at least indirectly. By which we may fear the Hazard there is in this Submission to Men, and may learn also the Deceit there is in what they teach Christians now, and particularly those who wou'd serve God in Perfection.

I said to her ; *That the Vows were approved by the Church as a perfect thing, and that all the World did look on them as good things.*

(1) Luke 10. 16.

She said; And for my part, Sir, I look upon them as evil things for all Persons: For he who resolves to be resign'd to God with all his Heart, has no need to be constrain'd to this by Men; because the Love he bears him, is still strong enough to tie him to God without needing that Men should interpose in it; and he who has not this resolute Will of resigning himself to be governed by God, cannot make Vows in any Order, except in Hypocrisie: Because Vows cannot constrain his Will, but his Body; and when the Body is constrain'd to do good against the Desire of the Will, he is then the real Martyr of the Devil; because he suffers much and merits nothing. And thus Vows cannot be good, neither for the Wicked nor yet for the Good, who, if they are so truly, have no need to be forc'd to do good by the Constraint of Men, if these Holy Founders have instituted Vows (which I do not believe) this must have been only out of humane Respect or Persuasion, or for want of divine Light; and if the Church approves them, it is to keep these Persons in a precise Dependence upon her, from which, if these Vows were laid aside, many would deliver themselves; which is to be desired, and it were far better that all these Persons in Vows had their Liberty, than to continue cloyster'd to the Damnation of their own Souls, and the deceiving of others, who look upon those under Vows as Saints, submitting to their Council and Government, tho' very often they are governed by the Devil, and he by their Means, gains the most Pious, who could not be gain'd any other way but by this Cover of Religion, which all the World esteems to be good and holy. By this the Devil gets into the Throne of God, that he may deceive by false Appearances. If he had remain'd among the *Turks, Jews or Heathens*, he could not have become Antichrist, seeing one cannot shock an Enemy at a distance, unless he approach him: So the Devil could not shock the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, if he had not insinuated into the Church it self, and among those in it, who make a Profession of Vertue, as the *Monks and Religious Persons*: and he having slipt in among these, draws all the World after him, and yet they do not discover him, neither dare they believe that he dwells in these Persons, who in Appearance and in the Esteem of all the World, are holy; because he has on his side the

. . . earned.

I said to her ; *That they who had enter'd upon a vertuous Course of Life, went into the Cloysters, that they might learn it better, and that by submitting their Wills to Superiours, they might learn to submit them to God.*

She said ; Sir, this School of Perfection is not good, for there they cannot learn true Vertue if it be not there. He who truly desires to resign himself to God, would do very ill to enter into Monasteries now : For the Spirit of God is departed from them. The first Founders informed themselves whether those who would enter into a Religious Life, were endued with, or aimed at the Love of God and Charity for their Neighbour : And these Institutors at present ask how much Money they have to bring with them into the Monastery ? And if they have Friends to give them Money after they are come there ? This is a general Custom. They must have one of these Qualifications, else there is no Entry into the Cloysters : They must also have a good Body, a good Voice, and good Health, unless Money supply all the rest, and for it they would receive the Devil himself, if he came there with abundance of Money. How can Vertue be found there, since nothing but Money and Gain is there sought for ? So that a vertuous Soul who should enter there, would be constrained to yield to the Prevalence of Vice, or else to go out again : For if such a one thinks to learn Submission to God by Submission to some Superiour, he will be very far from it : Because their Will is still contrary to that of God, who does all things that are just, good and true ; whereas these take Wealth unjustly against the Intention of their first Founders, who desired to live in Poverty. They act also against the Goodness of God, when they will receive none but the Rich, or those by whom they may reap Advantage ; whereas Jesus Christ receives every one, without Respect of Persons. They act also against the Goodness of God, when they teach their Novices holy Gestures and Countenances while the Heart is far from it, and they do not teach them any true Piety, but that only which has the Appearance of it, and is not true : So that the Novice cannot learn to subject himself to God by his Submission to Men, who in all things are contrary to him. Therefore I am sorry that a truly sincere Person should enter into a Monastery : For there he will find himself deceived, and will lose the Vertue that he had before he came thither : For there God is not to be found any longer.

I ask'd her yet one more Question upon this Head ; that is, *Whether one who in Simplicity believes that the Monasteries are yet governed, by God, and goes thither with a Design to lead a better Life than in the World, and being there Endeavours to live well as to his own particular, without following the evil Maxims which he sees are practised by others, would do Ill to go there, or to stay among them, having taken the Vows.*

She said ; Sir, this is a great Question ; but I will answer it, since I have promised to answer to what you ask. One who in Simplicity believes that God does yet govern the Cloysters, would not sin by entring into them ; But if he discover the Reality of the Evil, he is obliged to depart from them, even tho' he were profest, provided it be in his Power : For before God his Vow is null ; because he is disappointed of the Conditions for which he made it, which were to learn Perfection, and to be ruled according to God's Spirit. These supposed Conditions being wanting, he by Consequence may in Conscience and before God break his Vow, but not before Men, who by the greater Force, will maintain their Authority : So that one who has taken his Vows going from them, tho' for a good end and his greater Perfection, shall by them be held for, and treated as an Apostate. In this Case he must conform himself to the Sufferings of Jesus Christ, and endure Persecution for Righteousness. It were better therefore not to enter into them, fearing lest he have not Strength enough to endure Persecutions. But if he have been there for a long time, and cannot find the way to get out from them, he must resolve upon a long Martyrdom : For they will not only hinder him to live well, as to his own particular, but they will oblige him by Force to follow the evil Maxims of others : For the Devil is of this Temper that he will never suffer Good where he can hinder it ; and these Persons being guided by the same Devil, will not suffer another to do good where they can hinder it. Hereby we see evidently that their Malice is not humane, but devilish. For humane Malice extends it self only to Evil by its own Malice and Infirmary, or ceases to do good thro' Sloth or the Corruption of its own Will, which is never enclin'd to do Good. Nevertheless it esteems and honours the good Deeds of others, tho' it be not enclin'd to follow or imitate them. This is the utmost that humane Malice extends to ; but it never goes so far as to hinder another from doing good. How great soever this Sinner be, yet he willingly recommends himself to the Prayers of the Good :
But

But devilish Malice hinders all the Good it can, as these Monks do at present.

I said to her ; *I was much troubled to understand that there were such Mischiefs in the Cloysters ; because some of my Friends were there, whom I esteemed to be good Men, (and desirous to please God.*

She said ; Sir, If they are such they must be persecuted there, else I will not believe that they can be truly the Servants of Jesus Christ, and yet remain in the Cloysters without Persecution. A truly good Man can no more abide in the Cloysters than Water can abide in the Fire. There are many indeed who seem to be good Men, and have a good natural Temper to be at every body's Service, as *Hackney-Horses* are. These are not good Men tho' they seem to be such ; because like a Reed they bow with every Wind. The Devil and wicked Men make use of such Persons to cover their great Wickedness ; because by some such Simpletons, the World will judge that all are good and simple. But if your Friends be Men of Understanding, and of solid Vertue, they will easily perceive that all is corrupted in the Monasteries, and if they love the Righteousness of God, they cannot be silent, but will speak against Iniquity in, doing of which they shall be oppress'd with Persecution. If you speak to them in particular, Sir, and if they trust you with a true Relation of what passes among them, they will tell you yet more than I do : For I know not the Particulars of what passes in these Cloysters, but only in general, that they are abominable before God ; of which, their Behaviour in general is Evidence enough to those of good Understanding, who will observe it that they may conceive it aright. The greatest Evil is, that they cannot discover these Truths in any body ; because they are so powerful, and have such Authority, that all the World dreads them ; and thus the Evil being unknown, does Mischief to many, and encreases daily, and there can be no Remedy applied to it : And he who should attempt to do it, wou'd be crush'd under their powerful Arm : For they govern now all the Kings and great Men upon the Earth ; as it is declared in the *Revelation*, that (m) *The Whore commits Adultery with the Kings of the Earth.*

I ask'd her, *If this Whore of the Revelation was the Roman Church?*

She said ; Yes, Sir, doubt not of it. It is of her only that *S. John* speaks in his *Revelations*. Her Whoredoms will suddenly come to a Height. (n) You will very quickly see her overturn'd and render'd infamous before all the World. All those who follow her shall be desolate. For she shall be so miserably treated, that all the World will bewail her ; and according as she lifted up her self in Glory and Magnificence, she shall be as much debased and contemned. All her Courtiers, who at present extol and defend her, shall perish with her, and shall swallow down as much of her Curle, as they now drink of her delicious Wine. Yet a little while and she shall have no longer Force to persecute the Friends of God. Then we may preach the Truth thro' all the World, and every one shall receive it. What is now hid and cover'd with Silk and Purple, will then be discover'd to their Mischief and Confusion. Read, Sir, the Particularities of this Whore in the *Revelation*, you will find more than I tell you of them ; for I see its Mischiefs only in general, and they are so horrible to me that I tremble to think of them, and cannot, notwithstanding, (o) pray that they may not come to pass ; because this is what she has merited by the streight Righteousness of God, which will never be truly known or followed but by the Ruine of her who has quitted her lawful Husband to joyh her self with Fornicators ; Such are all false Christians with whom she commits daily new Adulteries to the wronging of her faithful Husband, who has lov'd her so much, and enrich'd her with all sort of Graces and Vertues, which she abuses, to give up her self to her own Voluptuousness and Pleasures. These if considered, will be found the Abyss of Evils : For she has no longer Fidelity nor Loyalty for her lawful Husband : She despises his Commandments and Laws : In short, she will depend only on her own Authority and Power, without reserving it to Him from whom she received it, with all that she has and possesses, which she perverts so miserably to the Prejudice of so many Souls, whom she leads with her self to Damnation.

I ask'd her, *How it was possible that a thing so holy, establish'd by Jesus Christ, could become so abominable ?*

She said ; Sir, the most perfect things become the most vile when they abuse their Perfections. We see Examples of this, both in divine and humane things. The Angels who were such excellent Heavenly Creatures, are they not become most infamous Devils ? Men who were created by God, with all sort of Perfection, surpassing all other Creatures, are they not become more miserable in Nature than any other Animals, for having abused the Graces of God ? Consider a beautiful Woman that gives up her self to Lewdness : Does she not commit more Sins and Impieties than an ugly one would do, tho' she shou'd prostitute her self as well as the fair one ? The more wealthy a Man is, the more he loses when ruined ; and one that stands very high, when he falls, hurts himself worse than if the Fall had been only from his own Height ; because the greater Height we fall from, the Fall is the more grievous. Jesus Christ had raised the Roman Church above all the People of God (o) that ever were in the World : For neither the Children of *Israel*, nor the People of the *Jews*, nor any others, did ever receive such Graces and Prerogatives as the Church did that Jesus Christ himself came to establish upon Earth. He bestowed on her, and adorned her with all sorts of Gifts and Graces, promising her a perpetual Assistance and infinite Happiness, lending her the Holy Spirit to rule and govern her : But she abusing all his Favours, falsifies her Faith promised to her God ; makes no reckoning of his Laws and Ordinances ; but will follow her own Institution. She abandons her self to that which most pleases her *Sensualities*, and makes Alliance with the Kings of the Earth, and Creatures like her self, having wasted with them all the spiritual Treasures which she had received from her only Husband : So that in her there is no Footstep any longer to be seen of the Path in which she trod, nor any of the Ways by which he walked, nor any Observance of the Precepts that he gave her. Instead of Poor, she is become Rich, instead of Contempt she is honour'd, and instead of renouncing the World, she seeks it, follows and caresses it : Are not these Heights of Infidelity great enough to make her be rejected and abandoned unto the Miseries in which she is plunged ?

(o) *Rom.* 1. 8-

I said to her ; *That this Change of the Church from Poverty to Riches, and from Contempt to Honour, was introduc'd for a good End ; and that the Councils had so ordain'd it for to support her.*

She said ; Sir, these are all vain Amusements, to believe that what Jesus Christ found to be evil, the holy Spirit wou'd now find it to be good. We have not a mutable God (p) who changes his Resolutions as Men do. He never chang'd and never will change. The Doctrine that Jesus Christ brought upon Earth is the last Instruction that God will send Men for working out their Salvation. We must not look for any (q) other thing. Whatsoever is contrary to his Words, does certainly come from the Devil, who presided in these Councils, who thus chang'd the Rules that Jesus Christ gave his Church for maintaining her aright in his Spirit. But they would not persevere therein but devised to find out Ways to maintain themselves in the Name and Authority of the Church by worldly Riches and Honours. It had been much better for the Salvation of Souls, that the Church had perish'd outwardly, when inwardly she did so, than to invent new Ways contrary to Jesus Christ to maintain her in Reputation. Even as it wou'd be much better not to have a Body, than to have one that is rotten : For that wou'd only infect others. I cannot express to you, Sir, the Stench that I feel of the Corruption of the Body of this Church. How much more Stinking must it be in the Nostrils of God ? Wou'd it not be a great Sin to praise and commend a Whore that outwardly were beautiful, but Pocky within, and design that many might go into her to be infected with her Filthiness ? Such a one wou'd commit as many Murthers as there were Persons killed by Familiarity with her. Are not you afraid, Sir, to do the same, when you will so much commend and excuse this *Roman Church*, which you may easily perceive to be corrupted ? And the more she is drest up with Vertues and Sanctity, she is the more capable of corrupting the Innocent, who approach her, thinking to find the Spouse of Jesus Christ without Blemish, while in the mean time they contract nothing but the Corruption of an infamous Strumpet. Thus the most Sound become diseased, and will perish if their Maladies be not quickly laid open, and dres'd, as is meet, by that divine

(p) *Jam. i. 17.* (q) *Gal. i. 8, 9.*

Physician, who comes upon the Earth to teach us all things, according to the Promise that Jesus Christ gave us speaking to his Disciples, saying, (r) that he would send the holy Spirit, who should teach us all things. He is now come, Sir, hear him.

(r) John 16. 13.

The Fifteenth Conference.

That the Time is come when the Holy Spirit will teach us all Truth. How Christians do reject his Light; and what Progress the Devil has made among them. For what end, how, and to whom God communicates his Spirit.

I Ask'd her, *Who this Physician might be, who could cure such Sores and such Corruption?*

She said, It is the Holy Spirit, Sir, which Jesus Christ did promise us a little before his Death, *who will teach us all things.* This is that LIGHT (a) which shall arise in the Darkness, which the World will (b) not receive, but (c) *Love their Darknes rather than the Light.* Therefore is it known by so few, because they will not receive it; giving more Faith to their Darkness than to this Light which breaks forth as a new Day upon the Earth, and comes to discover the Truth of all things. But Men are become now (d) so much Lovers of themselves that they will not learn the Truth, except in things (e) which are agreeable to them, resisting the Truth that reproves them, or is not conformable to their Liking and Inclinations. In this they will give Laws to the Holy Spirit, and make him speak what they encline to hear. In these Times the Sins against

(a) Isa. 58. 10. (b) John 14. 17. (c) John 3. 19. (d) 2 Tim. 3, 2, and 8. (e) Isa. 30. 10.

the Holy Ghost are fully accomplished : Therefore Jesus Christ calls them (f) dangerous times ; because the Sins which are committed then will not be forgiven neither in this World nor in the other. When Jesus Christ came into the World, they committed many Sins against him : Nevertheless all those shall be forgiven ; because the *Jews* never (g) understood that he was the Son of God : Nevertheless they have perceived and confessed that they did ill in putting him to Death, and all the Sins of which we repent, shall certainly be forgiven : But this Sin which is now committed against this Holy Spirit, will never be repented of ; and therefore will never be pardoned, neither in this miserable World, nor in that blessed one which is to come ; because they will never ask forgiveness for them, since they will not acknowledge them ; and if they will not suffer the Physician to lay open and search into the Sores of a Patient, how can they hope for a Remedy by his Cures ? Even so the Holy Spirit cannot heal the Wounds of our Souls, if we will not let him discover them.

I said to her ; *It was very desirable that these Wounds of our Souls were laid open, that they might be healed.*

She said: Sir, it is indeed a desirable thing, but it is very little desired : For all the World resists this Discovery, and they think they do a very pious Action, when they will hear nothing spoken of the Evils which have crept into the Church, nor yet of the *Monks* and others who profess to serve God. The Holy Spirit, it seems must accommodate himself to the Times if he would be heard, and must praise the Vices and Sins that are at present committed against him : For that String must not be touch'd to speak evil of those who desire to continue in Reputation or Authority in the Church, even tho' they should commit all sort of Abominations, and tho' they were *Sotterers* and Devils. They teach it as a Principle of Vertue that we ought to excuse their Sins, and take our Garments to cover them, that no body may perceive them. This is very far from desiring that these Wounds may be laid open that they may be healed. 'Tis no wonder, Sir, that I have so often told you, that I cannot see by what way there should be so much as one Person at present saved in *Christendom* ; because the greatest Part live as *Atheists*, without acknowledging God any longer (h) or

(f) 2 Tim. 3. 1. (g) 1 Cor. 2. 8. (h) Ps. 10. 4.

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thinking on him ; and the rest having the Reputation of good Men, are so full of the Sins against the Holy Ghost, that I know not what way they can be gained. If it should be told a Priest, *Sir, you are deceived in the Administration of the Sacraments: They do not operate of themselves, as you think,* he would think this Advertisement came from the Devil, and would resist it as a very ill thing : Or if it should be said to a Monk, or any other devout Person that they were not true Christians, they would presently take the Alarm and withstand the Person who should tell them this Truth, as if he were an Enemy of God, and a Liar : because he who has no desire to amend, will not be pleased to have his Faults discovered to him : Thus every one continues in his Sins, and desires not to leave them off, or so much as discover them. In this Men love *Darkness rather than the Light*, which arises so graciously, upon which depends the Salvation or Damnation of all the Men in the World : For the Darkness is (i) universal and there is no Sect or Nation whatsoever that is in the real Truth.

I said to her ; *That she was obliged to discover these Truths, that they would be of great use tho' it were but to my Soul.*

She said ; Sir, you are no more disposed than any other to receive the Light of the Holy Spirit, unless your Heart be humble and your Spirit simplified. This is what Jesus Christ told (k) *Nicodemus*, that he must become a Child, and enter again into his Mother's Womb ; affirming elsewhere that (l) *If we are not converted, and become as little Children, we shall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* These very Words must now have their compleat and perfect Sense : For he who shall not submit his Spirit in Simplicity as a little Child, cannot receive the real Truth which the Holy Spirit brings into the World ; because the Doctrines of Men and their evil Customs have so blinded and darkned their Understandings, that 'tis impossible for them to receive the Light of Truth, unless they be first stript of all their Sciences acquired by humane Means, which prove Vails and Bandages to the Eyes of the Soul : For these humane Maxims are all lying and deceitful, teaching to honour Men, and give Deference to them, when they are in Place and Dignities, not considering that Honour is due to God alone by

(b) *Isa.* 60. 2. (i) *John* 3. 7. (k) *Matth.* 18. 3.

his Commandment, and that Deference ought to be given to the Truth only, to which it is due; and as long as we don't apprehend these things, we will think we do well to adhere to the Sciences we have learned from Men, and will not empty our selves of them, that we may receive the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit; especially when by it we shall discover things quite contrary to our Sentiments, or those which our Masters taught us. You are not more than any other, Sir, delivered from your own Wisdom, which hinders the Holy Spirit, and that even under a Colour of good: For you would make Scruple to believe the Holy Spirit, when it should tell you things contrary to the Councils held in the *Roman Church*, as I perceived when I spoke of such things to you; because you have been brought up in it, and foster'd with a Belief that these Councils were directed by the Holy Spirit; tho' this cannot be true; it being your Resolution not to depart from her. This will hinder you from submitting to the Light of the Holy Spirit, which will have no Opposition nor Resistance, but a simple Submission.

I said to her; *That I could not disown I had Difficulty to believe things contrary to the Councils: Nevertheless I would follow the Light of the Holy Spirit.*

She said; Sir, you cannot follow the one without quitting the other; because indeed they are as far from one another, as Truth is from Lyes: For the Holy Spirit teaches only the Truth, which makes for the Glory of God; whereas these Councils teach only that which makes for their own Glory and Authority. Take off a little, Sir, this Veil of Preoccupation of believing blindly that *Rome* is the Holy Church; and submit to God that he may shew you what Truth is in this. You will feel evidently in the Bottom of your Soul, that God cannot change as these Persons have changed the Institutions of Jesus Christ. We must not be so void of Judgment, as blindly to lay the Foundation of our Eternal Salvation upon false Suppositions; but we must fully open our Eyes and consider if what we have learned hitherto, be more clear and solid than what is now discovered. You will thereby perceive which of the two is farthest from the true Light: But as long as you are partial, and can hardly believe this or that, your Soul is not free to receive this Truth. If you believe things, because Councils or others have told you them, you are not established in the Truth of these things, but only in the Opinion you have of those who tell you them. And do you not know that

that the Holy Spirit says (l) that *all Men are Lyars* ? Wherefore then will you believe things because Men say them ? I would never have you to believe my Words, because I say them ; but I would indeed have you to believe them because they are true. We ought always to follow and love the Truth, wherever it is ; but never to believe and follow a Lye, even tho' it shou'd come from the Mouth of a holy Person : For otherwise we shall commit great and irreparable Faults as to the Salvation of our Souls, especially in this dangerous time, wherein the Devil is plac'd (m) in God's Throne, and reaches us Lyes instead of the Truth. That God has given us an Understanding to comprehend, is not for temporal and transient things, but that we may understand and discern the Things that concern our Salvation and Eternal Life. In this we ought to employ all the Force of our Spirit (n) to discover if what they tell and teach us now in this Matter be true or not, without adventuring upon a blind Belief, as all Christians do at present.

I said to her ; *That I would not lean to a blind Belief, but to the streight Truth.*

She said ; Sir, if it be so, you will have no trouble to believe what I tell you, tho' it be contrary to the Councils : For I do not speak of my self, and I tell only what the Spirit of God dictates to me. Take good heed to my Words : they proceed always from the Spirit of Truth, who must teach all things. He cannot deceive you, as would your Learning and Studies, that you may have acquired by humane Means. Be jealous of them : For 'tis so long since the Devil did insinuate himself into the Church of God to corrupt it, that almost it cannot be told from what time it was corrupted : Infomuch that even while Jesus Christ was yet upon Earth, the Dvil (o) lifted himself as a Soldier of Jesus Christ, on design to thwart his Doctrine, and in the time of his Apostles he became a Captain ; because he had already gained many under his Power (p) ; and in the time of their Disciples he had yet more, and might then by just Title have born the Name of Colonel ; because he ruled many ; and after the Apostles Death he became a Governour by the Encrease of his Power : But since they would needs form this Body of the Roman Church, the Devil is become the General

(l) *Psal.* 116. 11. (m) *2 Thef.* 2. 4 (n) *Acts* 17. 11. (o) *John* 6. 10. (p) *Psal.* 1, 16. 3. 13, 19.

of it, by which Government, he has now conquered all the World, and is *universal Emperor*, especially over the Christians, whom he holds under his particular Empire. He is therefore justly called *Antichrist*; because he has gain'd the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, which by him has been *abolished* and *annihilated*; because under this Pretext of Christ, he has infatuated Mens Minds to make them believe that what is contrary to Christ, is Christ himself, and that what (g) is the Synagogue of Satan, is the holy Church. And thus by these false Persuasions, he has deceived all the World, and the most Religions believe they follow God, when they follow the Devil: because he is so masqu'd with the Veil of Piety and Devotion, he cou'd have prevail'd with *well-meaning Persons*, by teaching them Evil; but under this Colour of Holiness and the Holy Church, all the World do blindly follow him with such Fidelity, that it wou'd be very hard to divert them from him. Every one wou'd think he did ill to quit this Church, which is so only in Appearance, to follow the true one. I only regret you, and such as you, Sir, who sincerely intend to follow the real Truth, and nevertheless fear to resist Lyes, out of a frivolous Imagination that the Church will still continue in the material Place where Jesus Christ established it.

I said to her; That when I should discover this Spirit of Error, I would never follow it: That I would gladly abandon it, and follow the Spirit of Truth.

She said; Sir, if you would follow the Spirit of Truth, quit then all these foolish Persuasions that Christians have now, which are only invented by Antichrist, that he may gain all the World to himself by apparent Holiness. They wou'd persuade you that Rome is the Holy Church, that you must obey her in all her Ordinances. If you do this, you shall be an *Idolater*, ascribing to Men what belongs to God only; as Honour, Power and *Infallibility*. Every one believes that this belongs to her; tho' it belongs to none but God alone to be *Infallible*, and to use his Almighty Power: As also to receive Honour, appertains to God only: and he who seeks and desires it, is a Robber, and receives what does not belong to him. Moreover, if you refer your self in all things to the Church, she will oblige you to things against God and your Conscience, and make you to

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acknowledge that some Saints are Hereticks, as if he knew of me, she would condemn me for such, tho' I act only by the Holy Spirit, and all the Books that handle the pure Truth, are condemned and forbidden by this Church. There is no longer any thing but Lying that triumphs in her: For she even teaches that we may have the Pardon of our Sins without a preface Love of God; which overturns all the Law and the Prophets: For they are established, and have spoken for no other End (r) but to teach this Love which Man owes to God: And now there are Glosses and Arguments found out to disguise this Love, and to give it the Mantle of self-love, with which they promise us Salvation, that they may make us perish insensibly, without knowing it: For all they who do not precisely love God, (s) go to the Devil. Say the Church what it please, it cannot change the Ordinance that God made from the Beginning of the World. I see nothing there but Tricks and Distractions: For instead of saying to us what Jesus Christ said to the Young Man in the Gospel (t) *If thou wouldest enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, keep my Commandments*: For the obtaining of this Kingdom, she teaches us a thousand Fopperies which Jesus Christ never taught us, by *Indulgencies, Confraternities, Cords, Girdles, or Scapularies, and Devotions to Images*. All this to me seems so far from the Spirit of Christianity, that I am pained at the Heart when I think on't. I believe all these things serve only to dazzle Mens Spirits, that they may never come to the Knowledge of the Truth, and to amuse us as they do the Children, with Rattles to charm our Miseries.

I said to her; I would fain discover where the Holy Spirit was, that I might follow him.

She said; Sir, he is now come in the World. You shall know him by Truth, Righteousness and Goodness: For he is the same with God. There are not in God three Persons, as People imagine; because all that we can say of God, is, only that he is perfect (u) Love, all-just, all-good and all-true. Behold, Sir, all that we can know of God in this present Life; and when we are told, that there are three Persons in God, it is to be understood that there are three Powers, that Love is his Essence, that his (x) Word communicates

(r) *Rf.* 115. 1. (s) *Math.* 22. 40. (t) *1 Cor.* 16. 22. (u) *Mat.* 19. 17. (x) *1 Joh.* 4. 8.

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this Love, and that his (z) Understanding makes Man to comprehend it. This Love being the Essence of God, never beginning, and also will never end, which Love was communicated to Man from the Creation: But seeing he understood it not sufficiently, God made his Word (a) to become *Flesh*, that it might be the better understood by an Organ suitable to our Senses. Jesus Christ therefore is no other thing but the Word (b) which (c) communicates to Man this Love that is in God; and the Holy Spirit (d) is the Wisdom that gives the Understanding to comprehend this Love. Behold the three Persons that must be known in God, these are, the LOVE, the WORD that declares this Love, and the UNDERSTANDING, that comprehends it. Now the Essence of Love, was from all Eternity; But Men could not know it but since the Creation, and even then imperfectly. Therefore the Goodness of God found out the Means to make it known by this humane Body which he took for this end (e) when he came to treat familiarly with Men; he becoming Man to make them see manifestly how much he lov'd them: And not being yet satisfied with this, to communicate this Love so sensibly, he (f) moreover sends his Holy Spirit to teach them all things. You shall know him, Sir, by the principal Qualities of God, which are *Righteousness*, *Goodness* and *Truth*, which are always inseparable from the Spirit of God. Remark well, if what is told you, be still accompanied with these three Qualities.

I ask'd her, *If the Holy Spirit comes into the World in Flesh, as Jesus Christ did at his Birth?*

She said; No, Sir, there is no need of his coming in the Flesh, to communicate himself to Men as Jesus Christ did; because he comes not to shew them any new thing for working out their Salvation, Jesus Christ, having sufficiently taught them all things, tho' Men have not comprehended it; and now the Holy Spirit comes to give unto the Mind the Understanding of the same things which Jesus Christ taught while he was on Earth. Even as Jesus Christ came not to destroy the Law of God, but (g) to perfect it, so the Holy Spirit comes not now to destroy the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, but to (h) perfect

(z) 1 Cor. 2. 12. (a) 1 Joh. 5. 20. (b) Joh. 1. 14. 16. (c) Rev. 19. 13. (d) 1 Joh. 4. 9. (e) Eph. 1. 17. (f) Joh. 3. 19. (g) Joh. 16. 13. (h) Eph. 4. 9. (h) Matth. 5. 17.

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it, and to give the perfect Understanding of it to all those who will receive it. 'Tis not Needful that for this end he take a Humane Body ; because he brings no new Words but new Notices, that may be conceived by Mens Spirits. These Notices being spiritual have no need of a natural Body that they may be communicated to the Spirits of Men. If you would receive him, Sir, you must become a Child, and (i) submit your self wholly to God, and then you will find the Effects. But never let your self be deceived by false Appearances : For there are now many false Prophets that come in God's Name, and are of the Synagogue of Satan, as I told you formerly. Try always if they who speak to you do possess these three Qualities of God : Thereby you shall assuredly discover them. For if you let your self be amused with good Words, or even by the Gifts of Prophecies or Miracles, the Devil can counterfeit enough to deceive you. Reject also all those who praise, or flatter you : Because the Devil does ordinarily use these Means to deceive those whom he desires to gain to himself. The Spirit of God is always firm and true, full of Righteousness and Goodness. There is no need that he make himself visible to the Eyes of the Flesh, he shall be sufficiently felt by the Sentiments of the Soul, and the Eyes of the Spirit. He shall illuminate all Flesh, and enlighten the Spirits of all those who will hear and follow him. But there must be an humble Heart, and a Spirit entirely yielded up to God.

(i) *Gal. 4. 6.*

I

THE

The Sixteenth Conference.

How we must beware of false Christs and false Prophets, which seduce all the World, and are so much followed at present. How to discern true Prophets from the false; and that it would be to no purpose at present to aim at the Conversion of Christians by preaching the Truth to them.

I Ask'd her, How it was possible to beware of these false Prophets, since there were so many of them, and that they were disguised with Vertue and Holiness.

She said; Be upon your Guard, Sir; For it is in this Age that we (a) ought to be sober, and watch continually; because the Devil goes about us on design to devour and destroy us. If we have not Faith to believe all that Jesus Christ has foretold us, we could not resist him; because he is so disguised with Sanctity, and cover'd with Hypocrisie, that the most Pious will blindly believe and follow him. Resist him strongly, Sir, because of the warning that Jesus Christ so often gave us, (b) to beware of false Christs and false Prophets, that they will seduce and deceive many. It is not as to Turks, Heathens or Hereticks, that Jesus Christ bids us be so much upon our Guard, but false Christians who sit in the Throne of God. He who has not Faith to believe that this is the time now wherein (c) the Abomination of Desolation is in the Sanctuary cannot resist the Devil, because he resists the known Truth, and so commits a Sin against the Holy Ghost: For this Abomination is so true and manifest that no body can be ignorant of it, but they who are obstinate in Sin, and will die without Penitence, blindly presuming of their Salvation, without desiring to discover the Truth which is now set before their Eyes. The Holy Spirit who is now come to bring

(a) 1 Pet. 5. 8. (b) Matth. 7. 15. (c) Matth. 24. 15.

into the World the Light of Truth, clearly discovers all things, and shall make manifest the Lyes and Defects of those who are believed to be the Church, if the People will only give ear to the Truth, and not continue obstinately in the Persuasions which they blindly received : For such shall be destroyed (*d*) with *Sorcerers* ; not that they shall commit the same Sins with those *Sorcerers*, which poison others, but because of their Unbelief, they shall persist to believe and follow these false Prophets, who shall lead them into the Depth of their own Miseries, and this by the just Judgment of God ; because they loved (*e*) the *Darkness* more than the Truth, which God sends so liberally for enlightning the World ; and those who will not receive it, resist the Holy Spirit, and therefore cannot be forgiven neither in this World nor in the other ; and consequently they shall be obliged to continue with the *Sorcerers*, whom they wou'd not leave in this Life, reckoning themselves to be more holy than the Holy Spirit : For they wou'd not believe the Truth of the Evil hid under a Colour of Vertue and Sanctity, and resisted the Truth as an evil thing.

I ask'd her, *How I might avoid these false Bretheren, with whom I must daily converse ? and if I ought to have an ill Opinion of all ?*

She said ; Sir, trust no body, unless you see clearly that the *Righteousness*, *Goodness* and *Truth* of God lives in them ; or at least, that in the whole Course of their Actions they strive to attain to these three Vertues : For otherwise you will be easily deceived ; because you are of easie Belief. You shall think you treat with a *Servant* of God, when you shall be treating with a *Sorcerer*. There are so many of them thro' all the World that they make up more than three parts of it, and the most Wicked have the Appearance of Vertue and Holiness ; and by this Hypocrisie they deceive good Men who wou'd scruple to have an ill Opinion of their Neighbour. You must not be of the Opinion that all your Friends are *Sorcerers*, thereby to hate and condemn them ; but you must distrust every one that you may not be deceiv'd by them ; not to shock them thro' Malice, but to beware of them (*f*) thro' Prudence, till you know assuredly that they strive for these three Vertues of God ; because the Devil can never possess them, but in Appearance, and 'tis easie to disco-

(*d*) Rev. 21. 8. (*e*) 2 Thes. 2. 10. (*f*) Matth. 10. 16, 17.

ver when they are false : For the Qualities of the Devil, are *Lying, Inconstancy, Hypocrisie* ; and those who are of the Devil, deal usually in *Lyes*, and are inconstant and changeable, disguised and dissembled, (g) *hating the Light, fearing lest their Works shou'd be known and made manifest*. He who is of the Devil, is always haughty and proud, and affects Honour, and will not willingly yield to any body. On the contrary, he who is of God, or seeks him, has ordinarily these Qualities ; he is true, sincere and single in Heart, and endeavours to conform him self to the Life and Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and neither seeks, nor fears, nor hopes for any thing without him. All these Marks, Sir, will make you easily discern with what Spirit those are led with whom you must converse, that you may not let your self be advised by any erroneous Spirits, who are now so numerous, and in the highest Places and Dignities : Because the Devil being so powerful, he still prefers his own to Honours and Offices, that by these Means he may gain the more Followers. Therefore I advised you heretofore to abandon all, that you may not continue in so great Perils as there are now in conversing with Men.

I said to her ; *That I had a long time agoe quitted the Conversation of worldly and evil Men ; but as for those who seem'd to me to be good Men, I had never a hard Thought of them, and I could hardly believe that they belonged to the Devil.*

She said ; If none but Worldlings and wicked Men cou'd deceive us, Jesus Christ wou'd not have so often said, (b) *Be ware of those who come to you in my Name and deceive many, yea, even if it were possible the very Elect*. These Words make appear sufficiently that it is not Worldlings and wicked Men, of whom Jesus Christ says so often, *Be not deceived* ; because all good Men do abhor these Worldlings and wicked Men : They are therefore out of Hazard of being deceived by them. But these devout Persons, or who wear Religious Habits, being nevertheless in the Devil's Service, may deceive many under these false Appearances. It is with just Reason that Jesus Christ calls our Times *dangerous*, wherein the Dangers are so cover'd and disguis'd with great Advantages, that the one can scarcely be discerned from the other. We will esteem it a great Happiness to have some Friend a Priest

or a Religious Person, or plac'd in some Dignity, who being a Man of Honour and Learning, will give us his Advice and Counsel, both as to our spiritual and temporal Good : Nevertheless this Person shall sometimes be engaged to the Devil to do all the Mischief he can. Is not this a very dangerous thing ? For we take their Counsel as if it came from God himself ; and it comes directly from the Devil, who makes us follow his Will under the Pretence of its being the Will of God. Was it not needful, Sir, that Jesus Christ should so often and so precisely warn us *to take heed of these Dangers*, to which no Perils, neither from the Wicked nor from visible Devils, are to be compar'd ? because all good Men will always resist them : But these false Bretheren who come in Christ's Name, would deceive the very Elect. Therefore, Sir, trust no body, tho' they should say, *I am Christ* : For Christ is not here and there, but only in the Doctrine (i) that he left us by his Word. He who believes any other thing, is deceived.

I said to her ; *That if this were true, many Souls would be deceived ; because all they who profess to serve God, do follow the Counsel and Direction of some Man ; and if he be of those who belong to the Devil, they may deliver many Souls to Satan.*

She said ; Sir, this is lamentable in our Days, wherein they have introduc'd these Directions of Men, by which so many are led to Damnation, even tho' they were not directed by some Sorcerer, they are at least turned away from God to adhere to Men. This is a great Hindrance to Vertue, and the Salvation of Souls : For as long as we adhere to the Creatures (k) we shall never find God. The one must go out before the other enter ; and these Guides instead of leading Souls to God do withdraw them from him, even tho' they were good Men ; because God is jealous, and will not suffer a Rival, nor our Hearts to be separated or divided. If so many Souls be engag'd to the Devil by these Directions, it is because they chose rather to be lov'd by Men than God. This gives the Devil Power to gain them by the Means of these Directors, who are much more lov'd and follow'd than God is : For he is often forgotten, that they may remember these Men. Wives esteem them more than their Husbands ; Daughters more than Fa-

(i) John 14. 21, 23. (k) Cant. 3. 2, 4.

Father and Mother, and Men take more of their Counsel than that of Jesus Christ: Thus every one furnishes Matter for the Devil to be deceiv'd by him. It is by this Door he enters to make himself universal Emperour of the whole World. He had gain'd many before the Coming of Jesus Christ; but since he slip't into the Church by these Directions, he possesses all, the Wicked with their own Will, and the Good indirectly by the Conduct of his Adherents, whom he has introduc'd into the Church. For Jesus Christ did never establish such Directions in his Church, nor yet his Apostles, nor their Disciples. If this had been an Institution of the Holy Spirit, it would have been observ'd by the Primitive Christians, who had more Zeal to gain Souls to God than these new Directors have: For they rather draw them to themselves than lead them to God. This often makes the Guides and those who are led by them to perish and go both together to the Devil.

I ask'd her, *By what Means I might avoid the Seduction of these false Prophets; since they had the chief Ranks in the Church? how I might discover them from the true ones? If the one be Priests and Religious Persons as well as the other?*

She said; It will be very hard for to discern them, unless you read diligently the ancient Prophets; : There you will find how the true and how the false Prophets have spoken: For both the one and the other are this Day guided by the same Spirits. The holy Prophets were and still will be led (l) by the Holy Spirit; and the false ones were and still will be led and directed by the Devil (m), as well at present as under the old Law. There is only this difference of times, that then there were many holy Prophets, and now there are few or none; because the Number of the False is so encreas'd that they have almost swallowed up the Good. And as God is not visible by the Eyes of the Body, neither is the Devil visible after that Manner, both being invisible Spirits; who nevertheless render themselves visible by their (n) Operations: For he who is guided by God, will still speak (o) the Truth without regarding whether it please or displease Men: On the contrary, he who is led by the Devil, will still speak (p) as Men are willing to hear.

(l) 2 Pet. 1. 21. (m) 1 Kings 22. 21, 22. (n) Gal. 5. 19, 22.
2 Cor. 6. 7. 13. 8. (p) 1 John 4. 3, 6. 2 Tim. 4. 3.

Remark well, Sir, in the holy Scripture ; you will find (q) that all the false Prophets did then always tell good News, and promised to every one Peace, Prosperity and Assurance whereby they deceived all the World. This is even practised at present : For if you take notice of all these Priests and Religious Persons, you shall hear them always promising Peace and Safety to every one, and that even in temporal Affairs, whether as to the State or as to particular Persons : You hear them always telling good News, and promising that all shall go well : So that if you remark the Discourses of these false Prophets of the old Law, and the Preachers and Confessors at present, you shall hear them all speak almost the same Language : For the most Pious now-a-days study to please Men, and to tell them things agreeable to their Senses, and hereby they destroy all the World : For if they were in the Spirit of God, they would tell the Truth, and would preach to all the World (r) that the Abomination is in the Sanctuary, and that it is high time to turn to God. That (s) the Ax is laid to the Root, to hew down the Tree, and to break down (t) that great Statue of the Church which Sin has rendered abominable in the sight of God ; and also that the Life of Christians is very far from true Christianity ; and that the best of them live in a Presumption of their Salvation, and in other Sins against the Holy Ghost. Which is most true : But instead of doing this, they praise and exalt the Church as if she were holy ; and they persuade People that they are Christians when they are baptized ; and tho' they do not at all live according to the Rules of true Christianity, that yet nevertheless they shall be saved. In which they deceive and seduce them : For there are no true Christians, but they (u) who observe the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and nobody can be saved, but (x) he who keeps the Commandments of God, the first of which, is, to love God with all our Heart, and our Neighbour as our selves, which nobody does : Nevertheless all these false Prophets tell the People that they shall assuredly be saved, and that all shall go well with them. Is not this a sure Mark to discern false Prophets from the true ? because the False flatter us always for our Ruin, and the True reprove us for our Salvation. He that would deliver him-

(q) 1 Kings 22. 12, 13. Jer. 6. 14. 23. 17, &c. (r) Matth. 24. 15. (s) Matth. 3. 10. (t) Dan. 2. (u) 2 John 9. (x) Matth. 7. 21. 19. 17.

self from being deceived, must diligently examine whether these Church-men speak to us according as they are willing to hear, or if they truly reprove what is blame-worthy, of which sort we shall find so very few, that almost none will speak the Truth when it is displeasing to People, especially to those who are in Places and Dignities. For this cause our Times are justly called *perilous Times* (y), since the Evil is so masqu'd with Vertue: For if the Evil were manifest, there wou'd be no danger; because all good Men wou'd avoid it, and so wou'd put themselves out of Hazard of being deceived: whereas when it is covered over with Piety and Vertue, they think sometimes they wou'd do evil if they shou'd look on it as evil. Therefore Jesus Christ has great Reason to say to us so often, *Beware of false Prophets that come in my Name, and be not deceived by them*; and also to tell us (z) *that we must get out of Judæa*; that is, out of the Church, *when we shall see the Abomination of Desolation*. For this Cause I think, Sir, it is now time to flee.

I ask'd her, *If it would not be better to abide in the Church, and endeavour to make others like my self see the Deceit and Dangers in which they live, than by flying out of her to abandon them to these Perils?*

She said; If you could illuminate them and make them see the Truth without destroying your self, it would be better to remain in her, tho' it shou'd cost your Life; but there is no Appearance of prevailing with any, because they are so obstinate in their Sins, which they will not know: For if you shou'd tell any benefic'd Person in the Church that he is not a true Christian; and that the Church has fallen away and become more *Pharisaical* than ever the true *Pharisees* were, they wou'd not believe you, but persecute you; and your best Friends, the most Pious of them wou'd believe you were become an Heretick, and that you wou'd also pervert them: Because the Darkness is so great that they take Lies for Truth without perceiving it; and they shou'd esteem that to be evil which were most good. Therefore you wou'd do others no good, and you wou'd do evil to your self, and draw upon your self many Persecutions, and bring your self in hazard of falling from the streight Truth thro' an Infatuation of Spirit, with which the Devil directs every one, and hinders them from knowing or discovering the Truth. Therefore Jesus

(y) 2 Tim 4. 1. (z) Matth. 24. 16.

Christ said very well, (a) that we ought not to give Roses to Swine nor Childrens Bread to Dogs (b) : The Swine are Persons who wou'd make a Dunghil of the most fragrant Ver-
tues; and Dogs are they who wou'd tear the Truth by Re-
proaches and Calumnies. It wou'd not therefore be advise-
able at this time to remain in the Church, when Jesus Christ
advised to depart and flee out of her : For there you shall not
find Children who will receive the Word of God, which
is the Bread of our Soul, but Masters and Mistresses who
believe they are more wise and more just than the Holy
Spirit.

I said to her; *That it seemed to me, we were wanting in
Charity, when we minded only our own Salvation, and that
it was grievous also to follow God, without any other Com-
pany.*

She said ; Sir, you will not act against Charity, by with-
drawing from Christians now ; because they are obstinate in
their Courses to which they are habituated, and in which
they will die without Repentance, and therefore it will avail
nothing to preach to them : And the Holy Spirit tells us
somewhere (c) *that we must leave off to point out and speak
that which does not profit ; and that the God of Peace will very
shortly (d) bruise Satan under our Feet.* I understand hereby
that it is no longer seasonable to represent the Truth to Chri-
stians now, because they will resist and quarrel the Truth,
even when we wou'd make it known to them. It is to them
we ought not to point out the Finger, nor to speak ; because
no Words, how true soever, will profit them any thing. Yet
for all this, you shall not remain all alone in following God ;
but (e) a great many will follow him with you ; but you
must go among the Jews, where many will be converted
and receive the Truth, and will flee from the Spirit of Er-
rour, in which they have been detained for so long a time ;
For of God's People they became his Enemies : For this
cause they were scattered and divided : But by this Com-
ing of the Holy Spirit (f) they shall recover the Light and (g)
shall re-enter into the Sheep-fold of Jesus-Christ, and shall
be (h) his People, and the Members of his true Church.

(a) Matth. 7. 6. (b) Matth. 15. 26. (c) Isa. 58. 9, 14. (d)
Rom. 16. 20. (e) Rev. 7. 4, — 9. 14. 1, — 15. (f) Isa. 44. 3.
59. 20, 21. (g) Isa. 40. 11. Ezek. 34. 12, — 31. (h) Hos. 1.
10. 2. 23.

And because these are only guilty of the Sin against the Son of Man, it shall (i) be forgiven them; whereas those Christians will sin now against the Holy Ghost: Therefore they shall not be forgiven in this World nor in the other. You need not then amuse your self any more about this Matter; I have made Trials enough, having accosted the Persons most renowned for Vertue among the Christians, and I found not so much as one of them capable of receiving the Truth; they are so pre-occupied with their Roman Church, their Maxims, and seeming Vertues, that it may be said of them that as Jannes and Jambres resisted the Truth, even so Christians do resist it in the same manner. You are the first who has heard me tell the Truth: For till now I cou'd not explain it to any body. This did often trouble me and made me also resolve to quit the Conversation of all Men, and travel so long till I shou'd find some one to whom I might declare the Truth; Because *FOR THIS I AM BORN.*

I said to her; *That therefore she was obliged to declare the Truth to many, since she was born for this end, and she knew those who were capable to receive it.*

She said; Sir, it is not my Business to enquire for Men; because my Life consists in my Recollection; from whence the Conversation of Men would withdraw me: For I know by Experience that all Creatures are a Hindrance to me, and loss of time: I love rather to remain alone: But if you will transmit to others the Truth which I have communicated to you, you are free to do it, or rather obliged to it: Because God having permitted you to rencounter me, and given me time and Place to tell you so many diverse things, I shall believe he will require of you that you impart them to others: But you must consider well to whom; because every one is not capable of so great things, and if you address to some that are in Covenant with the Devil, of which there are so many at present, they will use you hardly, and consult with all these Followers of Satan, to oppose and to stifle these Truths in their Cradle. Therefore in this you must (k) *use the Wisdom of the Serpent, and beware of Men; For they will deliver you up to Governours, and will persecute you, or kill you because of the Truth, which is God.* (l) This bad

(i) *Matth. 12. 32.* (k) *Matth. 10, 16, 17, 18.* (l) *Rev. 12. 17.*

Conf. XVI. *Christians will not be converted.* 123

Usage foretold by Jesus Christ will in this Age have its full Accomplishment: This in the Beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ was but fulfilled in part, because the Apostles only and some few others suffered for the Truth; but at present many shall be put to death for this Truth, (m) *The Father shall rise up against the Son and he against the Father; and they shall deliver up one another to the Rulers to be put to Death; because (n) the Hour is come, and the Power of Darkness, which has so seiz'd upon all the Earth; (o) that they who shall kill you for the Truth, shall think (p) they do God Service: For Satan's Power is so great and universal, that it has almost blinded all Men; and their Spirits being infatuated, they take that which is false, to be real, and esteem Lyes more than the Truth: And all this is so well masqu'd with Vertue and Sanctity, that even the best Men will think they do offer Sacrifice to God, when they kill you. Therefore take heed always, Sir, that you give not the Children's Bread to Dogs, nor cast Pearl before Swine; but try well before you speak to any, if he hunger and thirst after Righteousness, or some other of the eight Beatitudes, which are the Marks that Jesus Christ gave, whereby to discover those who shall be bless'd and shall receive the Spirit of Truth: But as soon as you shall meet with Opposition to the Truth, leave off to tell it, and never move in that which will avail nothing: For God has promised that he will shortly bruise Satan under your Feet. Yet a little while the Devil has his Empire, (q) which encreases greatly; and so soon as it shall be at an end, God will bruise him under the Feet of his faithful Servants, who shall (r) triumph over all the Powers of Hell: But they must yet suffer a little, and (s) continue faithful unto death.*

(m) Mark 13. 12. (n) Luke 22. 53. (o) Isa 60. 2. (p) John 16. 2. (q) Rev. 12. 12. (r) Luke 10. 19. (s) Rev. 2. 10.

The

The Seventeenth Conference.

That the Jews and Heathens are better disposed to be converted unto God than the Christians ; and that the Jews shall be restored, and the Christians rejected.

I Ask'd her, *If I would run the Risque of these Dangers by going among the Jews, since according to her saying, they were more disposed to receive the Truth ?*

She said ; Yes, Sir, there is Hazard there as well as elsewhere ; because the Devil has those who are in Covenant with him, in every Place, in every State, in every Sect, and under every Law : For he has run to and fro thro' all the Earth, and hath devoured many, as well among the *Jews* as among others : But I except the Good among the *Jews*, and I know certainly that these are more disposed to receive the Truth than any others ; because they lin thro' Ignorance : For they never knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and do not yet know it : For they look for this Son of God in Glory, and know not that he shall be the same who came already among them in Dishonour. As soon as they shall discover this Truth (a), they shall return from their Exile, and re-enter into the Promise made to *Abraham*, and shall return to be God's People, in Exclusion of the Christians, who having abused so many Privileges (c) shall be cut off, and the *Jews* settled again on their Ruins.

I ask'd her, *Wherefore the Christians could not be reformed, that they might become the People of God as well as the Jews Converted, to take away their Crown ?*

She said ; Sir the *Jews* are much more disposed to receive the Truth, than the Christians are : For these sin out of pure Malicé, and have forsaken God and his Laws. This

(a) *Matth.* 23. 38, 39. (b) *Rom.* 11. 25, — 31. (c) *Rom.* 11. 21, 22, 23.

Conf. XVII. *The Conversion of the Jews.* 125

the *Jews* have not done. They do yet fear and know God, and the *Christians* do neither: For they preach publicly that to obtain the Pardon of our Sins, we are not obliged to love God; that to save us from going to Hell, it is enough to have self-love; that this Fear of their Damnation is capable of procuring them the Pardon of their Sins and Salvation; and they utter a thousand other Blasphemies against God in every thing. This they can't do thro' Ignorance; because besides the Law of God which they have received as well as the *Jews*: They have moreover the Law of the Gospel and the Doctrine of the Apostles, which was left them in Writing for an everlasting Memorial, which all *Christians* ought still to follow. The *Christians* have received Faith to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he came into the World, where he suffered Pains, Labours, Poverty and Contempt, was persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, buffeted, and at last put to Death on a Cross, as a Malefactor, and all this to give an Example (*d*) to *Christians*, that by following his Steps, they might enter into his Glory. They do believe all these things, and also that the same Son of God is really in the Sacrament of the Altar, with a great many other things contain'd in the *Creed*. Nevertheless, against their Belief they live directly contrary to what Jesus Christ taught them, and what they believe by the Command of God. If the *Jews* believed this, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, they would mourn for the Sins which they committed against him, and would follow his Example, (which (*e*) shall very shortly come to pass :) whereas the *Christians* shall die obstinate in their Sins without Repentance.

By which you may judge, Sir, that the *Jews* are much more disposed to receive the Spirit of Truth so soon as it should be communicated to them, than the *Christians* who oppose the known Truth. They know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he is in the Sacrament of the Altar, and thy shew him less Respect than a Servant would do to the meanest Master, and eat and swallow him as a Piece of Bread.

How would you have these Persons to be reformed, since they would reform all the World, looking on themselves as Gods of the Earth, and Children of the true God, while

(*d*) 1 Pet. 2. 20,--- 24. (*e*) Zach. 12. 10,---14.

they are led by the Devil? This they will not acknowledge, chusing rather to perish in their Darkness, than to give ear to the Truth: whereas those *Jews* would gladly hear what will enlighten them, and would be bettered by knowing the Truth: For many good Spirits among them aspire after it, (f) *hungring and thirsting after Righteousness*, which when they see and know, they will immediately embrace it; because nothing but Ignorance hinders them from resigning themselves wholly to God: Whereas the Christians thro' pure Obstinacy in their Sins, will not do it: So that if I should go to the College of Cardinals at *Rome*, and tell them that I come from God to advertise them that they are not true Christians, and that Jesus Christ taught another way of living, than what they observe, and that to be saved, we must of Necessity follow Jesus, they would presently seize on me as a Criminal, and put me to death, if I would not retract my Words, tho' they knew well enough they were true; even tho' they should evidently perceive that I had the holy Spirit, they would oppose this Truth, that they might maintain their Errours. How then, Sir would you have such Persons to be converted?

God will never force any body, having given to all Men their Free-Will, to use it according as they please. If these Christians will acknowledge no other God but their own Authority, they would deal hardly with God himself if he shou'd come to speak against it. How cou'd God in Justice reform these Christians, who will not be reformed, loving rather to perish in their Blindness, than to receive the Light, and this of their deliberate Will? Whereas those *Jews* are still looking for and aspiring after the Coming of their Saviour in Glory: Tho' in many things they err, Nevertheless they persevere in this Hope which will infallibly come to pass (g) to them, provided they (h) acknowledge the Fault they committed in putting Jesus Christ to Death.

I ask'd her, *Whether there was any Sect or Nation more capable of receiving the Truth, than the Jews, who were a People rejected by all Nations, and despised by every body, as unworthy of the Conversation of all good Men?*

(f) Jer. 31. 25. (g) Rom, 11. 26. Rev. 1. 7. (h) Hof. 5. 15.

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She said ; Sir, I know not precisely what the *Jews* are ; but as a Friend I can tell you, that they are yet the People who love God more than any other. Their being rejected and despised by every body, shall perhaps serve for a Satisfaction to God for the Sins which they committed in putting him to death : Because this is God's Way, (k) to chuse always the Things that are most vile and most contemned by the World. I do not at all doubt but the *Jews* will be the first in the Kingdom of Heaven ; because they have been so humbled and despised in this World ; in which they have imitated Jesus Christ more than the Christians ; who honour themselves more than God, and every one esteems them as the People of God. and Jesus Christ has told us by the Mouth of his Mother, (m) that he will put down the Mighty from their Seats, and will exalt the Humble. This makes me believe that this People of the *Jews*, so humbled through all the World, shall be exalted, (n) above all others ; and that the Roman Church which is placed in the highest Chair on Earth (o) shall be cast down from all her Power : Because God has said (p) that he who exalts himself, shall be abased ; and he who humbles himself, shall be exalted. It must needs be, Sir, that all the Words of God be fulfilled in all Respects. The *Jews* having been the most humbled People among Men, (r) ought to be according to the Justice and Truth of God, the most Exalted, as it shall (s) come to pass. For as soon as they shall receive the Truth which I commit to you, they shall be converted, (t) and receive the Holy Spirit, by whom they shall discover all things, see their Errors and the Truth, and embracing it, shall arrive at the Time so, often desired by them, in which (u) they will see the true Messiah and Saviour of the World come in Glory, who (x) will receive them into his Kingdom ; from whence the Children of it (y) shall be shut out. These are the Christians who shall never taste of his (z) Feast, tho' they were invited and

(i) *Isa.* 27. 9. 40. 2. (k) *I Cor.* 1. 27, 28. (l) *Zach.* 8. 23. Rev. 7. 4. 14. 4. (m) *Luke* 1. 52. (n) *Isa.* 62. 2, 3. (o) *Is.* 47. Rev. 18. (p) *Luke* 14. 11. (r) *Isa.* 60. 14, 15, 16. (s) *Isa.* 49. 23. 54. 11, &c. *Jer.* 31. 17. (t) *Isa.* 53. 11. *Hos.* 6. 3. (u) *Isa.* 66. 5, and 18. (x) *Isa.* 40. 9, 10, 11. (y) *Luke* 12. 28. (z) *Luke* 14. 24.

called unto it : But the *Jews* and Heathens shall sit down there, and the Christians shall be thrust out ; because they would not obey God's Call ; who having called them to Christianity, they would not conform themselves unto it : Therefore they shall never taste of his Dainties ; because this is the last Mercy of God, who will bring to his Table the Sick rather than the Whole, who resist his Will, as the Christians do now.

I ask'd her, *If I might declare to the Jews all the things she had told me, as coming from God by a Prophetical Spirit ?*

She said ; Sir, I am not Prophetical as the Ancient Prophets were, who spoke of very obscure things : So that many times, neither (a) the People, nor (b) they themselves understood well what they signified ; because the Time was not yet come to give the full Understanding of them : But at present, in this Fulness of Time, God declares his Secrets very manifestly, that every one may understand them : So that you must not say, Sir, that you are sent in the Name of some Prophet : because the Things that I have told you, are such plain and lively Truths, that no body of a good Judgment can doubt, but the Holy Spirit must have inspired them : For if they believe that God is Truth, my Words are so sensibly inseparable from it, that all Nations, both great and small, must confess, that in all my Discourses, the Truth is in its Source : And this Truth being (d) God ; it is therefore God assuredly, who declares these Truths : For the Devil is the Father of Lyes, and Nature finds out still Excuses, either in its own Sins, or in those it loves. By which you may see evidently, that Truth comes immediately from God, tho' it shou'd come out of an Ass (e) as once it did. Therefore you need not so much stay to judge whether I have the Spirit of Prophecie, as you ought to examine very narrowly whether I speak the Truth : For that is always God. The Prophecies of the Ancient Prophets, will all of them very shortly be fulfilled. There is no Need of any longer having obscure Prophecies ; because we are fallen into the last Times, wherein (e) all the

(a) Jer. 30. 24. (b) Dan. 12. 8. (c) 1. John 5. 6. (d) 2. Pet. 2. 16. (e) 1. Cor. 13. 8.

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Prophecies shall cease, and we shall see them all entirely accomplished, and we shall not receive any more new ones : Because the King of all the Prophets will himself govern his People, and will give an entire Accomplishment to all that has been prophesied of him. So that, Sir you shall not need to say, that you hold these Truths from a Prophet ; because the Work does always bear Witness who its Workman has been. Even so when the Truth is lively declared, it gives sufficient Evidence by what Master it is formed. I cannot conceal that I derive all my Wisdom from God ; because I never learned any thing from Men : But there is no Need to say that I have a Prophetick Spirit, when God gives Reasons and Comparisons to explain it after the Manner of Men.

I said to her ; That in many of her Discourses she spoke of the Future, and of the Time to come, and that as to those, we could not know yet, whether they were true or not.

She said ; Sir, what is to come, is as true as what I have already experienced. Receive all with Humility of Heart, and you shall see in its Time as clear as the Sun, that all shall be accomplished : For God cannot lye. The holy Scriptures must say the same things that I say : Because all proceeds from one and the same Spirit, and the *Jews* will understand me yet better than you do, because they are more vers'd in the holy Scriptures. I think if I spoke to them, their Hearts would be over-joy'd and ravish'd with Pleasure, to know that so great a Happiness is to befall them, as to become the People of God, and to suffer for his Love, till they shall see him come in Glory, with his Angels, to render to every one according to his Works. The Christians have this in their Creed ; which contains the twelve Articles of Faith, *that Jesus Christ who is ascended into Heaven, shall come again to judge the Quick and the Dead :* And notwithstanding they will not believe it, tho' they say it daily : Or, they imagine that this Coming shall be so suddenly, as if the Judgment were to be by Way of Enchantment, and that it were to pass in an Instant, or in one Day. These are foolish Speculations : For the Judgment is already begun, and I know not how many Years it shall last ; only at the End (f) Jesus Christ shall appear upon the Earth in Glory and (f) *Matth. 24. 30.*

Majesty, and so shall (g) converse with Men, who shall be all made happy with his glorious Presence, which shall fill them with Glory, and shall wipe away all their Tears and Griefs to bring them into Joy that shall never end. They who will not believe this, are Enemies of their own Good ; because there is nothing in the World that can give them (h) more Constancy to suffer, than the Hopes they have, that in the End they shall see the glorious Coming of Jesus Christ upon Earth. All sorts of Consolations are comprehended in this.

I said to her, *That the Jews look for the Coming of their Messias in Glory, that he would come to reign and abide with them : but that the Christians look'd for him only to come and judge the World, and to go away again, carrying along with him all the Blessed,*

She said ; Sir, the Jews shall not be disappointed of their Expectation : They shall see their *Messiah* in Glory, (i) who will govern them upon Earth, conversing, eating and drinking with them : For he himself says, *that (k) he will make his Friends sit down at his Table ; and that he will rise up and serve them ;* now in this Paradise, which the Christians imagine, there shall be no need of sitting at a Table, nor eating nor being served : And also when Jesus Christ said to his Disciples (l) *that he would drink no more of the Fruit of the Vine, till he drank it new in the Kingdom of his Father ;* he means certainly of the Earth ; which shall be the Kingdom that God will give to the Body of Jesus Christ : Because in the Divine Kingdom, there can be no Planting of Vines nor making of Presses to drink Wine there. Truly, Sir, the Christians are superstitious in many things, and they judge rashly of all that they do not comprehend. They may clearly see by the holy Scriptures that Jesus Christ shall have a glorious Reign, and that he (m) will be the Restorer of all things, and also the Saviour of Men ; Because all (n) the Prophets with the Apostles and other Saints have sufficiently spoken of these things which shall certainly come to pass : For the Scripture cannot err or fail : But because they have not re-

(g) *Rev.* 12. 13. (h) *Rom.* 8. 18. 2*Thes.* 1. 5. (i) *Ezech.* 34. 23, 24. (k) *Luke* 12 37. (l) *Matth.* 26. 29. (m) *Rev.* 21. 25. (n) *Acts* 3. 21.

received the compleat Knowledge of them to explain all, the Christians Fancy in their Speculations ; that this shall come to pass in a divine and incomprehensible Paradise without reflecting that the divine Kingdom cou'd not be promised to Jesus Christ ; because as God, he always possess'd it, and has no need of being promised what he possesses : For Possession is always greater than Promise ; for that is wholly accomplished by Possession. Therefore the Promise of Jesus Christ must be on Earth ; where he shall reign (o) over all Men, shall save them, and re-establish all things ; because in the divine Heaven there is nothing to be re-established : For nothing was ever spoiled there : Nor any to be saved ; because all that are there, have Salvation ; and whither, can they imagine that God shou'd carry the Blessed with him, since he comprehends all things, and cannot be contain'd by any thing ? They speak of God, as if he had a Closter somewhere for his Retirement.

I said to her ; *That the Jews had look'd a long time for the Messias ; but that the Christians did not expect him till the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection of the Dead.*

She said ; Sir, the Jews have done well always to wait for their *Messiah* : For a Thing is then more loved when it is long desired. It is a constant Faith that makes them persevere in this Expectation, which shall be recompensed with a great Joy, when they shall receive the Fruit of their Hope : For it is not vain, but very well founded on all the Holy Scriptures ; which is the most solid Foundation in the whole World, since it is the Word of an *all-wise, all-good and all-mighty* God : But when the Christians look for their Saviour only on a certain Day, (p) they are not so diligent to prepare for his Coming, which they imagine to be yet far from them. They confound divers things together, which have no Relation to one another ; and they make but one Day of the Plagues, the Judgment, the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory ; as if all these things were to be done together : But they are greatly deceived. (q) *we have not a God of Confusion*, who surprises Persons

(o) *Psal.* 2. 8. *Psal.* 22. 29. 71. 8. *Zach.* 14. 9. (p) *Luke* 12. 43, 46. (q) *1 Cor.* 14. 33.

at unawares, confounding them by precipitating things : On the contrary, all his Ways are so well regulated and ordered, that there is not a Devil in Hell that cou'd say in truth that God gave him the least Surprize, or that he could find in all his Works the least Injustice or Want of Goodness and Truth. This being so, how cou'd it be that God shou'd send all his Plagues in one Day, that no body might have Leisure to be converted, being surpris'd so suddenly with so many different Evils as to be chastised, judged, rais'd again, saved or damned all in one Day? If God has been just, good and true from all Eternity, wou'd he become impious at the last Day? This cannot be : But Men mistake him, and every one judges of him according to their Fancy : For if they wou'd judge uprightly, they wou'd not dare to say that God cou'd surpris'e Men to judge and chastize them so suddenly. I wou'd gladly ask Christians, where they find it Written, how long the Judgment shall last?

I said to her ; *That no body had distinguished these Times, and that all Christians believed that the Judgment, the Chastisement, the Resurrection of the Dead and the Coming of Jesus in Glory, were but one and the same thing, and that they should come to pass all together.*

She said ; Sir, They are very much deceived : For these are all divers things which must come to pass at different Times : For first of all the Judgment is, when God saw the universal Iniquity of all the Men of the World, and that not so much as one knew and lov'd him ; he by straight Justice judged and condemned the World : And that he might not surpris'e any, (r) he delays the Execution of his Sentence, that Men might discover by Experience that the World is judged, seeing the Evils to encrease, and Peoples Amendment desperate. This is the greatest Evidence to verifie that the Sentence is irrevocable. God does this, that Men remarking these Truths, may quake for Fear, and be converted unto him, that they may obtain his Mercy, at least every one for their own particular. I believe, Sir, that these thirty Years the World is judged and condemned ; and that now the Time is come to put this Sentence in Execution. It will begin (s) with the Plague

(r) 1 Pet. 3. 9. (s) 4 Esdr. 16. 18, &c. Matth. 24. 8.

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of War, and then that of Pestilence, and after of Famine, that there may be time given to all Men of good Will to repent, and to take these Plagues in Penitence for their Sins, and by these Sufferings to find a Way to return to God with all their Heart and to rise from Death to Life, that is to say, from Sin to Grace, as the *Jews* shall do by being converted first of all, that the Lord may find (t) them watching at his Coming, and may say to them, (u) *Well done good and faithful Servant ; because thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will set thee over great things : Enter into the Joy of thy Lord :* Which Joy shall be recovered at the Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory, who will overthrow (x) all Evil by the Brightness of his Coming, which shall be seen and understood by all the Men who shall then be remaining on the Earth. Thus it is that God orders these last things (y) with Weight and Measure, that he may still exercise his Righteousness, Goodness and Truth, even to the End of the World, waiting still for Sinners to Repentance, being desirous (z) that they shou'd be converted and live. Whatever Men say, God will never depart from his eternal Qualities, and will not confound his last Works no more than he did his first : For he continues still firm and constant in all his works. If Men will not know this, 'tis their own Fault, and the Effect of the straying of their Minds : Nevertheless it is time to open their Eyes : For the Plagues are begun.

I said to her ; *That the Jews were wilfully obstinate not to believe that Jesus Christ was God, which the Christians did believe assuredly ; and consequently they were nearer to be converted than the Jews.*

She said ; Sir, the *Jews* are less obstinate than the Christians ; because there is more Ground for their Unbelief than for that of the Christians, who reject the Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory, tho' it be verified by all the Holy Prophets, the Apostles and Jesus Christ himself, who in so many divers Places declare his glorious Coming, and very few speak of his Coming in Reproach. This makes the *Jews* doubtful, knowing that God never surprises any ; but often

(t) *Isa.* 62. 6. (u) *Matth.* 25. 21. (x) *Psalms* 97. 3, 4. *Zach.* 14. 4, 5. *Rev.* 1. 7. (y) *Wisd.* 11. 20. (z) *Ezech.* 33. 11.

foretells the things that must come to pass ; and they finding so frequently in the Holy Scripture the Propheſie of his Coming in Glory, and so seldom his Coming in Reproach, they have some fundamental Reasons, for which they cannot believe his Coming in Reproach : But so soon as the Truth shall come to enlighten them, they will yield to it ; because they love it : Whereas the Christians do formally resist it, and wilfully impugn it, and will not believe what they read so often, nor hearken to the Light that is offered them thereupon ; being desirous to continue obstinately in the Persuasions in which they have been trained, and blindly to believe the Sentiments of Mens preferring them to the Truth of God. So that the *Jews* will sooner believe that Jesus Christ is God, than the Christians will believe that the same Jesus Christ shall come to reign in Glory upon Earth, tho' this Coming be much more to be desired and valued than that Coming in Sufferings and Reproaches : For he who highly esteems God, will be troubled to believe or see he shou'd be abused or despised, and become the Reproach of Men, he who deserves all Honours in Heaven and Earth. Hereby the *Jews* have more humane Ground not to believe the Coming of Jesus Christ in Sufferings, than the Christians have not to believe his Coming in Glory, which is more honourable, pleasant and desirable, tho' the *Jews* as well as the Christians do very ill not to believe both the Comings of Jesus Christ, which are equally true, both the one and the other.

I said to her ; *That she seem'd to hold the Jews Part more than the Christians.*

She said ; Pardon me, Sir, I am not partial ; and if I were, I wou'd rather take the Christians Part, among whom I am born, than that of the *Jews* whom I never saw. I hold only the Part of Truth, without leaning to any Side ; because I have no Pretensions upon Earth : Neither *Jews* nor Christians will give me any thing : But God will judge me in Truth and Righteousness : Therefore I will always observe it without Respect to any body. If I knew not that the *Jews* are more disposed to receive the Truth than the Christians, I wou'd not speak to their Advantage : But I cannot conceal the Truth, when it is asked me. If you address these *Jews*, you will find my Saying true : For I know nothing of my self :
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All comes from a Source from whence no Lye can be drawn. I am not enclined for the *Jews*, nor for any other Sect in the World : For I know none of them that are well pleasing to God : But I love those best that are most disposed to receive the Truth, and to be converted unto God, and I remark this People of the *Jews* to be more disposed for this than any other : Which, in Trust, I declare to you : Not that I may be lov'd or despis'd ; but that I may simply declare the Truth as I know it. Make a Trial of it, Sir, and of all the other Things which I have told you, you will find them in their Time, all true : For I am not for telling things that are extravagant, or without Necessity. You will have Need after this, to know all that I have declared unto you. They will be very profitable for you, and for those whom you shall judge capable of receiving them. Doubt nothing of them. Conceive and digest them all. You shall receive from them great Light in your Understanding, and Strength, and Nourishment to your Soul, and you shall still enter farther into the Knowledge of God and of your self, which shall be an Everlasting Happiness for you. Beware of being tempted to believe the Contrary : Because the Devil will surprize you with false Appearances under a Pretext of scrupulous Piety and Justice.

The Eighteenth Conference.

*How the Holy Spirit gives his
Light to the Soul.*

I Said to her ; *That I would not doubt of her Words ; because I believed that they all came from the Holy Spirit.*

She said ; Softly, Sir, all my Words come not from the Holy Spirit : For he does not dictate to me all the Words that I must pronounce ; but the Substance of all that I say ; because I would never speak otherwise than by his Motion ; and no other Discourses are necessary for me : For I have no Desire to please any ; and all that makes not for the Glory of God, seems to me a superfluous and useless Thing. Therefore I do not willingly utter any Discourse but these to which the Holy Spirit moves me : But he does not dictate to me all my Words, I have Need to express my self by Humane Reasons or Comparisons ; because otherwise they could not understand me : For the Holy Spirit speaks so succinctly, that one Word makes me comprehend many things. He gives Subtilty to the Understanding to conceive great Things by one of his small Motions. It is just as if one were in a fine Room, well adorned with divers Furnitures and Rarities : But there were no Light in it whereby to see all these things. In such a Case it would require a great many Words, to make him who had never seen them, understand in particular all the fine things and Furniture that were in the Room, telling him here are such and such Pictures, such Tables, such Seats, and such like Things ; and yet we could not make him comprehend well the Beauty of this Furniture and Rarities : But if a Light were brought into the Room, tho it were but that of a Candle, in a Moment it would give more Knowledge of all the Things that are in the Room, than

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than all the Discourses that were uttered to make them known. So it is with the Light of the Holy Spirit when it enters into a Soul, it makes it know and comprehend all things very clearly: Nevertheless these things cannot be seen by Souls who are yet in the Darkneſs and Obscurity of their own Paſſions; Many Words and Discourses muſt be uſed to make them underſtand the Rarities that are in the Works of God. It is thus, Sir, that I tell you all my Words do not come immediately from the Holy Spirit: But indeed all the Subſtance of what I ſay; Becauſe I never had any other Maſter, nor any other Study, but that of purging my Soul from Earthly Affections. By this I received the Light of all the things of which I have ſpoken to you with many more, which nevertheleſs I could not make you underſtand, but by Words and Discourses, accommodated to your Capacity, which are not all precisely endited by the Holy Spirit Word for Word, except that in general they are produced by the Gift of Wiſdom, which (a) the Holy Spirit always brings along with him into the Soul where he reſides, giving it the Skill to expreſs it ſelf, and to make Divine Things be underſtood by thoſe who are in Darkneſs. Therefore, Sir, you are not deceived in believing that my Words come from the Holy Spirit: For it is true, if you take them in Subſtance: But if you would maintain a precise enditing of Words, the Enemies of the Truth might ſurprize you in ſome Terms not well expreſs'd, or ſome Word of a contrary Signification, or other Faults of my Language, which come from my Weakneſs or Ignorance: For the Holy Spirit can commit no Faults. He always gives his Light perfect and compleat to the Soul that is purified from it ſelf: But he does not always give precise Words and Terms to make it be underſtood by others; becauſe it does not remain always precisely hearkning to the Enditing of the Holy Spirit, being often diſtracted by Earthly Objects, which divert it ſometimes without its being aware; and in this Diverſion it may commit many Faults, even tho' it had received the Holy

(a) *Iſa.* 11. 2.

Spirit. For this Cause our Life is always dangerous, and we ought (b) still to watch that we be not surprized by our Enemies.

I asked her, *How she could see by the Light of the Holy Spirit, things which consist in Matter of Fact, as the Deportment of the Jews, and Christians, and others?*

She said; Sir, this is manifested to my Understanding even as Divine Things are, without any Distinction, except that the Soul receives more Contentment in conceiving and understanding the Things of God, than those which respect Men; tho' all come from the same Source, nevertheless they have different Effects: For when God shews to the Soul his straight *Righteousness*, his universal *Goodness*, his pure *Truth*; it is filled with Wisdom and solid Vertue by those which it remarks in God; and when he makes it see his *Glory*, *Majesty*, and his *Almighty Power*, the Soul is filled with Joy, Honour and Strength, in Consideration of the Qualities of its God; But he no sooner makes appear to it the deplorable State to which Men are reduced now, than the Soul is afflicted, and thirsts with a Desire to see them converted unto God, who also shews unto it all the necessary Means for this Conversion. And as a Physician cannot rightly cure a sick Person or Patient, without seeing first the Cause of the Disease, or laying open the Sores of his Evil; even so does God towards a charitable Soul, that is touched with a sensible Regret to see its Neighbour perish, and with a Desire to succour him with all its Power. Then God makes it see the Sores, that is, the Faults and Sins of his People more distinctly than if it conversed daily with them, even though it has never seen them by the Eyes of the Body. Nevertheless it knows them better than they who converse daily with them; Because the Light of God pierces to the Bottom of Souls; and the Sight of Men perceives only outward things. Therefore many are often deceived, and take what is false for true: But God judges always with an upright Judgment: And when the Soul has Bowels of Charity to help its Neighbour, God shews it the State in which he lives, and also the Means by which he may rise again from his Fall. This

(b) 1 Pet. 5. 8.

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is the Reason why God makes Matters of Fact, which respect our Neighbour, to be as well perceived as divine Things, and that by the Light of the Holy Spirit, which is so much the brighter the farther it is removed from Humane Light and Natural Knowledge. For this Cause, Sir, I retire so much from Men, and will learn nothing from them; because their Wisdom hinders and obscures the Light of the Holy Spirit; and according as I am removed from them, accordingly I approach to true Knowledge: For sometimes I wou'd tell you better what passes among the *Turks* or other remote Places, than what is done in my Presence: For my Eyes may deceive me: But the Holy Spirit cannot deceive me.

I asked her, *How this Light had its Original? If the Holy Spirit did immediately declare things to the Soul, or if the Soul did propose them first?*

She said; Sir, this is done differently: For sometimes the Holy Spirit gives Notices of the Things which the Soul never saw nor thought of: At other times he makes it understand something which it saw or understood imperfectly: But for the most Part, the Light is demanded by the Soul when it prays for it or for somewhat else: Then if it be well recollected, it receives the Understanding of what it asked, either God grants it, or makes it see ~~wherefore he denies it, or else what it ought to do or forsake to co-operate with the Designs of God, and to obtain its Request.~~ Behold how the Lights of the Holy Spirit have their Rise. All that is needful in this, is (c) to disengage our Soul from Earthly Affections, and to resign it to the Will of God; Then he governs and illuminates it in such sort as that it cannot be ignorant of any thing that it ought to know: For as for simple Curiosities, we ought never to ask or desire them; but only that which is well pleasing unto God, or profitable to our Neighbour: The Knowledge of which Things God does not deny to Souls who are faithfully dedicated to him. I wish, Sir, you may be one of them, that you may learn in a Moment more things in these Matters, than I cou'd tell you in a whole Day: For one Word from God contains more than Ten Thousand Discourses of Men, which are still accompanied

(c) *Pf.* 73. 23,—28.

with many Defects and Imperfections : Whereas the Holy Spirit has a perfect Accomplishment in every Thing, and enlarges himself according as the Soul is emptied of it self. We have nothing else to do, but to empty our selves ; because God being always in the Center of our Soul, he wou'd enlighten it abundantly in case the Hindrances were removed : For take them away and we receive Light.

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THE
LIGHT
OF THE
WORLD.

The Third and Last Part.

CONTAINING
The Last Conferences

WHICH
M. ANTONIA BOURIGNON
HAD WITH

The Deceast Mr. *CHRISTIAN de CORT*,
Priest, Pastour of *St. John's at Mechlin*,
Superiour of the Fathers of the *Oratory*
there, and Directour of the Isle of
Noorestrandt.

Which deserves to be Read, Understood, and Con-
sidered by all who desire to be Saved.

Written Originally in *French*.

L O N D O N,
Printed in the Year MDCXCVI.

Isaiah 58. 10.

Thy Light shall arise in the midst of
Darkness; and thy Obscurity shall
become as Noon-day.

To the READER.

HERE is, FRIENDLY READER, the Third Part of the LIGHT OF THE WORLD, which is also the Last Conferences that I could have with this Zealous CHRISTIAN DE CORT, (Superiour of the Oratory, and Pastour of the Church St. John at Mechlin in Brabant) since to hinder him from having any more Conferences with me, they poison'd him, and so murder'd him, to hinder the Prosecution of the Pious Designs which he had to make known to the World the Truth of the Decay of CHRISTIANITY.

This Third Part shews yet more clearly than the Two foregoing, how much the Church of God is fallen from her first Institution, and how far she is remov'd from the Principles of the Apostles, and the Life of the First Christians; how many Errors and Corruptions have by little and little crept and slipt into Christianity; what Appendages and Circumstances they have added to it: How many New Laws and Ordinances for the Ornament of it, which in effect have deform'd and disfigur'd it? So that whereas Christendom was in its Beginning The True Spouse of Jesus Christ, she is now become The great Whore, which commits whoredom with the Kings of the Earth, drinking in their Cups, and eating of their Dainties, which are the Ambition, the Pleasures, and covetous Desires of the Things of this World. Which Things are now as common among the Churchmen as among the Kings of the Earth, to say no more. This is very far from the Lowliness of Jesus Christ and of his Disciples, who lived in Humility of Heart, in a Contempt of the Honours and Glory of the World, and would take no other Delights but Labours, Fatigues and Sufferings; and despised Gold and Silver, as appears by the Offer that Simon the Sorcerer made to St. Peter, of giving him Money to buy the Grace of God: He curses him and his Money. And when they asked Alms of him, he says to the poor Man; Silver and Gold have we none, but the Power of God which will heal thee: And elsewhere they say; Freely we have received it, and freely we give it: And to shew the Poverty there was in the Colledge of the Apostles, we need but remark that they had not wherewith to pay the Tribute, since Jesus Christ sent them to catch a Fish in which they should find a Piece of Money to pay this Tax. Consider now, FRIENDLY

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LY READER, if there be any Resemblance between the Churchmen of our Time, and the Colledge of the Apostles, and if every one does not strive to come by the Fatteſt Prebendaries, thirsting still insatiably for more Honour, Pleasures. and Riches, that they may Rule in this World, instead of Enduring and Suffering in it, in Imitation of their Master and Captain Jesus Christ, who says so clearly to them, I have done all to give you an Example; and, Be ye Followers of me.

But those Persons at present, do directly the contrary, despising Lowlineſſ and Humility, abhorring Poverty, and avoiding Sufferings as much as they can. Are not these Adulterers who falsifie their Faith promised to Jesus Christ in Baptism to renounce the Devil, the World, and its Poms? And after their Oaths, they go and take up what they have renounced conforming themselves to the World, and its Poms and Vanities, as much as they can: And in the mean time they will still bear the Name of Christians, which signifies, the Spouse of Jesus Christ: As in effect those Persons really were, if they had continued in his Spirit and the Imitation of Him. From which they being fallen, they are nothing now but unfaithful Woremongers and Adulterers, worthy to be cast off by their Lawful Husband, as they infallibly shall be; for He cannot acknowledge them for Christians when He sees them in their Manners wholly Antichristian.

It must not be imagined that this Evil is only in the Roman Church, as all the Reformed would persuade themselves, calling the Roman Church commonly, The great Whore in the Revelation: since all and every one of these Reformed are more Whores than their Mother, the Roman Church, from which they have separated, not to Reform her, but to Deform her the more, by rendring her a greater Beast than she was in her self, For we see these Reformed live much more licentiously than those who continue in the Roman Church, who being under Discipline, are regulated and restrained in their Manners, whereas the Reformed being subject to none, live as Beasts, every one following his own Will and the Inclination of their corrupt Natures.

This is that which made all these Reformers to depart from the Roman Church, that they might make New Institutions, accommodated to their Looseness. For since they were resolved to give the Reins to their Brutish Senses, they could not abide any longer under the Obedience of a Superiour; and being inclined to follow Carnal Pleasures, they must depart out of the Roman Obedience, where they had taken Vows and Oaths of Chastity, for else they had been cast into Prison as perjured and impious:

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impious: And that they might have Money enough to satisfy the Pleasures of their Taste, they must be followed by Rich Persons who might furnish them with Money in abundance. For this Cause they made Schisms in the Roman Church, and they Established New Churches every one after his own Fashion, who contradicted one another, and understood one another no more than the Builders of the Tower of Babel; and in this they were followed by many Honourable Persons, who thought there was some Good Thing in the Reformed, and so much the rather that they were agreeable to Corrupt Nature, which they flattered and nourished in its Vices. For these Reformers did not bid the People, separate from the Roman Communion, that they might live in Gluttony and Whoredom: This would have been too infamous and reproachful among Good Men; but they told them the Abuses of the Roman Church, proposing to reform them: Though in Truth it was but that they might lead a Licentious Life, shake off Piety and Truth, and give Loose Reins to the Motions of their Corrupt Nature, and let it follow its Desires and Inclinations without constraint.

For if they had designed a Pious Reformation, they would not have despised the Good Things that were in the Roman Church, and would only have resisted the Evil which they judged to be there, and Reformed that Evil first in themselves, that by their good Example they might have led others to Reform themselves too; since Example is an Effectual Preaching. But these Reformers proceeded after quite another manner, and rejected the Good with the Bad, without distinction: Because if they had maintained what was Good in the Roman Church, they would have been obliged to observe it them themselves. This they had no mind to do, being resolved to lead a Licentious Life, and to give Loose Reins to all their Brutish Senses. They could not subject the People to the Obedience of a Superiour, since they themselves would not at all depend upon one. Therefore first of all they perswaded the People to shake off a Dependence on the Pope and other Superiours, that they might live every one after their own Way, as the Beasts who have neither Fears nor Cares but eat and drink well. This is against all Decency; since no Country, no Common-wealth, no Family can be well ordered and governed without a Head, a Superiour, or a Father of the Family, to whom the rest are subject: And I pray you, FRIENDLY READER, what would a City or a Province be, if it had no Magistrate, no Superiour? No other thing but a Den of Thieves, Robbers, and other Malescactors,

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who would hinder all Good Men from dwelling there. And though Superiority be so good, useful and necessary even in the Civil State, yet these Reformers reject it as an Evil Thing, and will depend on none but themselves, and live independently, that they may the more follow the Swings of their Brutish Senses, whose Motions they let loose without Restraint. These Reformers did not only cast off Obedience by their Reformation; but also the Confession of Sins in particular: For they would not declare to another the Luxury and the Excess which they had a mind to perpetrate; and they could not enjoin others what they would not do themselves. Therefore they rejected, and even despised this Confession, though the Scripture sayes expressly, Confess your Faults to one another: And Confession in its self is Good and Holy, humbling the Heart, and serving for a Bridle and Restraint to Sin in Time coming. All this sort of Good these Reformers rejected, together with the pretended Errours they said they had discovered, forgetting that the Scripture says, Try all things, and hold that which is good.

I will not excuse the Errours and Abuses which have crept in among these Auricular Confessions; since I blame them more than these Reformers themselves did, as may be seen in this **LIGHT OF THE WORLD**: But they ought not to pluck up the good Grain with the Tares. That belongs to the Lord to separate them in the Day of Harvest, and not to these Reformers to come before the Time and pluck out of the Holy Church the good Things which Christ had planted there: Such as Fasting and Abstinence are, which these Reformers have so absolutely rejected and despised, though in the Scripture Fasting is recommended; for the Apostle sayes, Be ye sober, and watch: And elsewhere it is said, Sanctifie your Fast. And Jesus Christ speaking to his Apostles of one posselt, sayes to them, This kind goeth not out but by Fasting and Prayer. He himself fasted Forty Dayes in the Desert, and was an hungred. But these Reformers speak of nothing but filling their Belly well the better to excite their Lust. Are not these who would Reform the Roman Church, fine Zealots for the Glory of God? We see also that all their Reformation has brought nothing but Schisms and Divisions among the Reformed themselves. There is nothing there but Debates and Dissensions. They wrote to me some while agoe that Two Preachers of the same Reformed Communion had fallen by the Ears together even in the Temple, and the one had rent the others Garment from Head to Foot. These are the Effects of their Reformation, and of the Remedy they say they have

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have provided for the Abuses of the Roman Church: The Scripture says, That the Tree is known by its Fruit. From whence we may infer how pernicious these Reformati^ons must be, which have caused such Mischiefs in Christend^om, having brought in nothing but Hatred among Christians, though Jesus Christ did so much recommend to them, To love one another. By these Reformati^ons they have despised, hated and persecuted one another, beat, rob'd, kill'd and murdered one another without compassion, to maintain the Opinion that they have undertaken to believe, though all their Opinions be equally bad, the one erring one way, and the other another. So that to maintain the Errours of these Reformers these Christians kill'd and murder'd one another, instead of loving one another according to the Counsel of Jesus Christ. And these Enmities continue to this Day, and they hate and despise one another upon the Account of their Religion, though all of them signifie nothing, and no Religions can save any.

Nothing but the Love of God brings Salvation; and all these Persons love themselves only, and live all according to the Motions of Corrupt Nature: Their Religions consisting in nothing but Theory, and vain Speculations, not at all in Practice. But to flatter them with some Piety and Devotion; their Reformers have put the Bible in their Hands, and some Songs to sing in the Temple: since the Priests and Religious Romanists used to sing in the Temple, and corrupt Nature has no Repugnance to Songs; it rather delights in them, as all these Reformers do at this Day, who lift up their Voice as well as they can to make their good Voice be heard in the Temple, where they sit at their own Ease, with the Bible in their Hand, on which they profess to read that they may learn to discourse of it, though I have not known one Person who puts in practice so much as one Point of the Gospel. So this is all the Service that these Reformers have learned their Disciples, together with the Lords-Supper, that is performed without Devotion or Piety. And notwithstanding of this they call themselves good Christians, Evangelical Persons, Predestinated, or Regenerated Ones, and other good Names: Though they be as far from Salvation as Heaven is from Earth. But these Reformers have known so well how to perswade them of an Imaginary Salvation by their Scholastick Reasons and Glosses, that they have thereby so confounded their Spirit, as that they receive Lyes for the Gospel.

That which is most to be admired, is, that among so many Persons of Understanding who have followed these Reformers, none have perceived the Cheat of these Sensual Reformers, who teach a Life quite

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quite contrary to the Evangelical Life, which speaks of nothing but denying a Mans Self, bearing down his Flesh, and doing Penitence, with a Threatning that without this Mean we shall all perish. It must indeed be said, That from that time Men have been abandoned to the Spirit of Errour and Lying, and that Mens Spirit has been quite blinded by Sin, and is since still more blinded; since yet in our Time we see Persons of a like Temper list up themselves above others, and call themselves the Reformers and Restorers of Israel, and separate from the rest of the Reformed; that they may live separate from the World in greater Holiness than others: Though in their Manners they be as sensual, yea more, than those whom they have forsaken. For having no Accommodation of Worldly Goods, and being unwilling to Work, but desirous to be well Treated and Served, they undertake Reformations, drawing over to them Wealthy Persons that they may obtain their Aims, and they make all their Goods common: In which the Poor cannot but have Advantage, and the Reformers Services, and a good Time of it, according to their Aim; since in effect many follow them, and give them all their Wealth, with which they Eat and Drink and Marry as those did in the Days of Noah: On which Terms they make them Preachings of Fine Studied Words and fitted for the Gust of the Hearers, who are well pleased to have found out a way of Salvation so well accommodated to their Corrupt Natures: since they make them believe, that they are all ruled by King Jesus. They are persuaded by their frivolous Discourses that this is true, and thus Men are yet amused by Men as they were in former Times.

And I can see no other Remedy but that God overturn all these Churches made with Mens Hands, that he may establish one made of Spirit and of Life, where we shall worship God in Spirit and in Truth. Which he makes me hope shall come to pass very shortly; since he makes me declare so many Truths with the hazard of my Life to overturn Babel and revive True Christianity. Blessed shall he be who shall receive them from God's Hand, and shall not resist the Truth as Jannes and Jambres did; since these are undone for ever! But receive the saving Truth that God has communicated to me in this LIGHT OF THE WORLD, which will illuminate your Soul. In the mean time, I remain,

Friendly Reader,

Your very Affectionate in Jesus Christ,

ANTHOINETTE BOURIGNON.

T H E

THE LIGHT of the WORLD

The third Part.

The first Conference.

Declares that God has never demanded any other thing of man but the dependance of his Will on Gods ; and that all other Laws are given him by Accident, and to discover his Sins.

HAVING been absent for some time from this illuminated Soul, I went to find her again to entreat her to pray for me, and to tell her I was resolved more than ever to resign my self wholly to God, that I might receive his Divine Light.

She said, Sir, as soon as you shall make this Renunciation of your self, and shall deliver up into God's Hand the Freewill that he has given you, you shall receive the Holy Spirit, which will teach you all things. But never turn back again to resume your own will ; otherwise the last Fault will be worse than the first : Since you have now received more Light than formerly, walk according to it, and do not any more regard the World, nor the Creatures, for they

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cannot

cannot save you. You must fall into the Hands of God (a) whether you will or no: No body can escape this, whether he live well or ill, he shall have no other Judge. 'Tis a very small matter for us to yield to God the free will that he has so freely given us; since 'tis his Property, and he has entrusted it in our Hands only for our Benefit. Shall we procure our own Misery with the greatest Present that God has ever given us. Since we have so often experienc'd that we always abuse this Free-will, (b) employing it rather for our Damnation, than for our Salvation; Let us acknowledge, Sir, our weakness, and resign our Free-will into the Hands of God, that he may dispose of it at his Pleasure during this short Life. He will give it back to us in the other, with such Perfections that we shall not be able to abuse it any more. Do not delay longer, Sir, so much as one day to make this transferring of your Free-will to God: For in this consists (c) all Perfection, all the Law and the Prophets, and Life everlasting: For all Vertues, the Old Law, and the New, are no other but true means to attain to this Resignation of our Free-will to that of God: in doing this we fulfill all things, we need not be solicitous for any more.

I said to her, *I was greatly comforted to understand, that to fulfill the whole Law we need only resign our own Will to that of God, and that I heartily resigned it.*

She said. Sir it is most certain that God has never demanded any other thing of Man (d) but the resignation of his Will to his, and only gave him Laws and Precepts (e) when he saw Man withdraw himself from him to follow his own Will, by which he is fallen into all sorts of Sins and Miseries; and fearing lest through Ignorance and Inadvertence he should dye and perish in his Sins, God gave him Laws and Precepts that Man might know Sins, and abstain from committing them: Otherwise Man (f) would

(a) Ps. 139. 7. 12. (b) Is. 66. 3. 4. (c) Job. 6. 38. (d) Pr. 23. 26. Is. 58. 13. (e) Wisd. 12.2. (f) 1 Tim. 7.

Conf. I. Of Resignation and dependance.

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never have needed any Laws in case he had continued in a dependance on the Will of God : He might have done all that he pleased, and enjoyed all things Created for his Use, and that even with delight. By which you may see, Sir, that it is sufficient for Man to resign himself to the Will of God, tho' he should not follow any means appointed for the Attainment of these Ends, as the Commandments of the Church are, he will assuredly be saved; yea, though he were a *Turk* or a Heathen, (h) or of any Sect or Nation whatsoever: Because God has never given any other Law to Man, but the DEPENDANCE that he ought always to have upon his God : And all the Laws are occasioned by Sin, and their Goodness consists in the (i) discovery of it; that this knowledge may withdraw Man from it, and remove from him all these Sins, which prove hindrances of this Resignation to God : For if Man had no Sins which turn him away from God, he would certainly be resigned to him : For he is created for this, that God may take Delight in him, (k) without any resistance, and that he may accomplish all his Will in Man (l) with his free Consent and Will, which is the most perfect thing of all that can be imagined; for if Man were united in Will to God, he would partake of all his Qualities; and as God is the Fountain of all Good, Man would be also all Good; and all Just, because united to the true Righteousness; and also all true, being conformable to the Eternal Truth; and consequently he would fulfill all the Laws by this sole Resignation to God. without his needing to learn or follow them in particular, they being all comprehended and summ'd up in the inseparable DEPENDANCE of our Will on that of God.

I said to her, *That my Soul was ravished with Pleasure to understand that God demands no other thing of Man, but the submission of his Will to that of his God, and that by this means I hoped many would yet be Saved; whereas (according to her Discourses) I had sometimes despaired of all, and of my self also.*

(g) Ps. 37. 4, 5. (h) Act. 10. 34. (i) Gal. 3. 17. (k) Prov. 8. 31. (l) Is. 1. 19.

She said, You had reason for that despair, because we see no body in our times who has his Will resign'd to that of God, except in Words. which (m) perform nothing in effect; but it is most certain, that if a Heathen who never heard of God nor of his Laws, should consider by his natural Judgment that there is a God who governs all things; and if he should resign himself to this God, unknown to him, taking from his Hands all that befalls him, acknowledging him the Author of all Good, resolving with the consent of his Will to yield himself to be ruled and governed by him; (n) such a Heathen would be a Saint, though he should not observe any of the Commands in particular, because he would observe them all in general, without knowing it; for he who is resign'd to the Government of God (*) can never do Evil, nor commit Sin, unless he withdraw himself from this Government to follow his own Will. I would believe that there are yet some Persons scattered up and down the World who have resigned their Wills to the Will of God; but taking the generality of the World, and considering how men govern themselves, it is manifest enough that no body resigns his Will to that of God; for we see nothing but self-will reigns every where: From thence it comes that so many Sins are committed. We see the self-will of all Men bear sway in all things with the same affectation, for they esteem nothing more than their own Will; they seek and follow it as much as is possible for them, in eating and drinking, and in all other bodily things, in Sciences, and in the choice of Estates, and Dignities, and in all things that give Contentment to the Mind, yea, even in pious and spiritual Exercises, they are done according to the desire and inclination of Self-will, and no otherwise; for if our Will were resigned to God, it would not seek; it self in any thing, neither in small things nor in great: For one who is truly resign'd does not any more possess himself: He takes and receives all that God is pleased to give him, and is most content with what he thinks fit to deprive him of. This is very far from the practice of

(m) 1 Cor. 4. 20. (n) Math. 8. 10, 11. (*) Ps. 37. 5, 6.

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Men now, who would willingly set themselves against the Will of God, if it were possible for them, in all that he permits to befall them against their own Will; yea, even though they be Persons consecrated to God by solemn Vows, we discover and find them to be so wedded to their own Wills and Inclinations, that all their Actions as well good as bad, are nothing but a constant course of Self-Love, which never ends till Death, and even sometimes follows them after it by Legacies or Testaments made according to this Self-will; and nevertheless they believe, and all the World owns, that they are the Servants of God, entirely dedicated to him, without observing what Jesus Christ says, *that (o) to be his Disciple a Man must deny himself*: By which words he explains to us what this DEPENDANCE on God ought to be; for the whole Law of the Gospel is nothing else but the Explication of the dependance that we ought to have on the Will of God: And when he says, *Deny your selves*, this is nothing else but to say, Resign your selves to God, because he who follows himself, hinders God from ruling over him; so all the other Precepts of Jesus Christ are but to point out to us the means by which we may attain to this Resignation of our Will to God's; for when Jesus Christ says, *(p) Renounce all that you possess*; This is not that God has need of Silver, or other Possessions, but because Man has so set his Affections on what he possesses in this World, that he would not be content that God should take them from him, and as long as he has a desire to possess them, he cannot be resign'd to the Will of God, for he has yet his *own*: And when Jesus Christ says *(q) Take up your Cross, and follow me*; this is also to lead us to this Resignation of our Will to that of God; for being all good, he cannot do Evil to any, nor take Pleasure in making us suffer; but he who will not endure the Pains and Crosses that shall befall him, cannot be resign'd to God, for he does not willingly suffer, though his Sins have deserv'd it. And when Jesus Christ says, that we must *(r) cut off the Foot, or*

(o) *Math. 16. 24.* (p) *Luk. 14. 33.* (q) *Luk. 9. 33.* (r) *Math. 5. 29.*

pluck out the Eye that offends us; It is not that God has need of any of the Members of our Body, but to teach us that he who is resign'd to the Will of God, ought willingly to lose his Foot or his Eye, yea, his Life when God shall permit it; for he who has resign'd his Will to the Will of God, has no more any Care of, or respect to himself, suffering himself to be entirely governed by God, independently from his own Will. And because we did not comprehend sufficiently how this dependance ought to be, and were so far removed from it; Jesus Christ came upon Earth to explain to us by what means we ought to recover it; for all his Precepts are only means to attain to it.

I asked her, *how we might know when we are wholly resign'd to God, and that our Liberty and free-will is yielded up to his disposal.*

She said, Sir it is very easie to know this; for he who has truly yielded up his Free-will to God, will use it (v) no more, but deny all that it demands, even to the least things; he yields no longer to it in any thing, but waits on God for all that he must have, having no more to yield up to him but this Free-will, he only receives from God without acting in any thing. Such a Person performs all his Actions in dependance on God, if he eats and drinks it is nothing but out of pure Necessity, without regarding whether it be sweet or sour, all is good to him, provided it be wholesome and sufficient for the maintenance of his Life: He seeks neither Ease, Pleasures, Honours, Riches, nor any Earthly Contentment; and if any of these things occur, he takes them indifferently from God's Hand, for he has no longer any desire of his own. He neither desires Honour, Estate, Riches, nor any thing that delights the Mind, knowing well that it is not in this Life that one must take his Contentment, no more than Jesus Christ did while he was on Earth: On the contrary, he finds in his Soul a willingness (u) to suffer Reproaches, Pain, and Labour, though contrary to his natural Inclination. A Soul dead to it self, and resign'd to the Will of God, neither seeks good, nor even Vertues,

(v) *Mat. 26. 39. (u) 2 Cor. 12. 10.*

but those which God will give it, and affects no means to obtain them; but is well contented to be most ignorant, and stript of all sorts of Sciences, and means even of perfection. In one word, Sir, a person who has yeilded up his free will to God, desires no longer any thing on Earth, and expects only what it shall please God to permit or send him, receiving Prosperity and Adversity with an even mind, without Joy or Grief, since he believes, That (x) God will not permit any thing to befall him but what shall turn to his good. All these are signs to know whether we be resign'd to God, or not; for we must not flatter our selves in saying, that we are resign'd to God, while we live wholly to our own wills, and follow, as much as we can, our own inclinations.

I said to her, *That I never knew any on Earth who was so resigned to God, as to take all from his hands, and to have no self-will, on occasions; tho' many pretend, that they will live wholly to God, and do his will.*

She said, Sir, Do you not see, that these are all Cheats, and that those who say, they would please God, and do his will, deceive themselves, in believing, that God is pleas'd with their words, without effect. If you never knew any person, who yeilded up to God the free will that he gave him, you may well say, that you know none in a state of salvation: for no man can be saved (y) who follows his own will. For Adam committed no other sin to undo us, but the following his own will: The matter of eating an Apple was not sufficient to cause all the miseries under which we yet groan. That which ruin'd the Children of Israel was nothing else but (z) that they would not be contented with the Government and Will of God, desiring rather to suffer the miseries of Egypt, in doing their own wills, than to enjoy the delights they had while they Resign'd themselves to God. VVhen all the world-perish'd by an universal Deluge, it was because every one was more bent to follow his own will, than to submit to the word that God proclaimed by Noah. And when the Jews were given up to the Spirit of Error, it was for no other Reason but that they valued more their own will than the light that God sent them to receive, and know His. By

(x) Rom. 8. 28. (y) Isa. 66. 4. (z) Psalm 81. 12, 13.

which we may see, that in all Times and Ages God has always demanded the Submission of Man's Will to his own, and has rejected all those who follow their own Will. Do you believe, Sir, that it will not be thus with Christians and all the World now? It is certainly the very same thing, for God never changes. What he required from *Adam*, he certainly requires from all his Posterity. We are mistaken if we think to deceive him now with formal Words and Discourses, saying that *we will be resigned to him, and do his Will*, when in effect we will only follow our own on all occasions. This is one deceit among others, which are crept into Christendom, to make all the World Perish: For no body knows what it is to be resign'd to God, while every one says, he is; and on this false persuasion, they insensibly destroy themselves.

The second Conference.

Of Free Will. That it is the only thing which represents in Man the Infinity and Liberty of God; That the greatest Gift which God has given to Man, is, to love him freely and infinitely, which is the greatest Perfection in Grace, figured by that of Marriage in Nature.

I said to her, *since our own Will is so dangerous, it were to be wish'd we had never receiv'd it.*

She said, Sir, what Blasphemy do you utter against the Goodness of God, who (a) has given us this Free-will as the most precious thing that ever was; for by it we are made like (b) to God, whereas otherwise we should be nothing but limited Creatures, in whom

(a) 4 *Esd.* 8. 56. (b) *Gen.* 1. 27.

God could not take Pleasure? To desire that we had no Free-Will, would be to despise extreamly the Treasures of God, since it was purposely given us that we might (c) be the more united to him, without which we could not be the Images of God, because we should have had no resemblance of him, without this Free-will, which makes us (d) *Little Gods*, without which all Men would be but Filth: For, according to their Nature alone, they are more miserable than the Beasts. Could God take delight in a thing so unlike to himself, could so powerful a God unite himself to such an Impotent Creature, who had not Free-will to love him? God having no bounds nor limits, could he take Pleasure in a Creature whose Will was bounded, and could a limited Will attain to the Love of a God without limits? How could a finite Being love an infinite? There would be no proportion there, and if Likeness beget Love, how could a being so vastly different be united in Affection? God who (*) has made all his Creatures so perfect, even to the least Creature that ought to serve for the use of Man, would he have made Man so imperfect, who ought to serve for his own delight? In this there would be neither Justice nor Goodness, and Man alone might lament and bewail his misfortune, who would find himself destitute of all the qualities requisite for the end for which he was Created, that is, to love his God. And this Free-will which is given him for this Love only, can it be blamed, or despised, because we abuse it? It had been better we had never been Created, than to have been without our Free-will, which is the greatest Good that the Goodness of God could bestow upon us. Would we not judge a Father very cruel, who having great Wealth and Treasures, would not give them to his Children, and who, because some of them had abused them, would leave all the rest in Poverty, and give all his Wealth to Strangers? Can we wish that God had done us this Injustice to deny us our Free-will, since there was a necessity he should give it to some? Are we not his true Children, since he has

(c) *Pf.* 40. 9. see 2 *Cor.* 8. 8. (d) *Act.* 17. 28, 29. (*) *Gen.* 32. 4. (e) *Pf.* 110. 3.

said, (f) *Let us make Man after our Likeness*? We are thereby made his Legitimate Children, resembling him more than any other Creatures; and therefore his greatest Treasures belong to us, among which Free-will is the chief, and most precious Good. If some abuse it, (h) it is their own Fault. God has always exercis'd the Justice and Goodness of a true Father in giving it to us, we are to blame if we will abuse it; for these Benefits ought never to be upbraided to any: A Son who has wasted all his Patrimony, ought to smite his own Breast, (i) acknowledging his Fault, without ever believing that it comes from the Goodness and Equity of his Father, who on his part has done him all the good he could; but he ought to beg pardon for having thus abus'd his Favours. All those who say they would have wish'd rather not to have had Free-will, are unworthy to be call'd *the Children of God*, for they impute to him the Fault which they commit themselves. This is a quality of the Devil, always to blame others for the faults which they do themselves, and to accuse the Good of their own wickedness. And to wish we had never receiv'd Free-will, is to wish never to have been a Child of God, and indirectly to blame him for the Faults which we commit in abusing his Graces. This is a great contempt of God, that deserves a double Punishment, one for the Ingratitude that we commit against God, and another for having thus abus'd his Benefits. And as a Beast is not capable of knowing the Beauty and value of a precious Stone, so Man would have been a brutish Animal if God had not given him an Understanding to comprehend, and a Free-will to love Him, without which he would be as incapable of knowing and loving God, as a Beast is of a Jewel, which surpasses its Capacity. And yet they would wish that this Free-will, which is the only advantage of Man, had not been given him! what Ingratitude to take such inestimable Favours of God for a Misfortune!

I said to her, *That I intended not to despise the Gifts*

(f) *Gen.* 1. 26. (g) *Act.* 17. 18. (h) *4 Esd.* 8. 56. (i) *Luk.* 16. 8.

of God, by saying, that it had been desirable he had not given this free-will to Man: *but I only consider'd, that by it Man so easily ruin'd himself.*

She said, Sir, by all these humane Sentiments every one Blasphemes against God; 'tis no wonder that the Whore in the Revelation is (*k*) full of names of Blasphemy, since Blasphemies are so common in the Christian Church, which she represents: They esteem that good which God reckons to be Evil, and they hold that to be Evil which God counts good; yea, his most holy and perfect Works are rejected or despis'd by Men, which is evident by your present Sentiments; since it seems to you, it had been better not to have received Free-will from God; that is to say, by way of Reproof to him, that he had done better not to have given it to Man. Do we not shew by this, that we would be God's Masters, and Directors, to teach him his Duty, and correct him, by saying, he had done better not to have given this Free-VWill? To what is Man come, that silly Worm of the Earth, who would give orders to so wise and powerful a God? Is it enough for Man to excuse himself by saying, *That he considers only the ill use that is made of these Graces of God, without applying his Mind to consider that the VWorks of God are always good, just, and true; and that all the Evil that can ever be found in them, proceeds only from the wickedness of Man, who abusing the Favours of God, makes use of his Graces to offend him.* It were better to have a Sentiment that reproves Man for this wickedness, than one that reproves God in his VWorks; as Men do now, who judging with carnal Eyes, condemn the goodness and righteousness of God. 'Tis more than time, Sir, that he should take order with so many evils, without suffering any longer so many Blasphemies as are daily utter'd against him, and wherein even the Holy judge, sinistrously of the most holy and perfect of his VWorks. It must needs be that all things be very shortly overturned; for no body knows God any more, nor his VWorks.

I acknowledged my Fault in having so often spoke evil

(*k*) Rev. 17. 4.

of the Works of God, saying to her, that it was only thro' Ignorance, and not thro' Malice.

She said, Sir, Ignorance excuses not Sin. You are always obliged to know that God is a perfect Good, from whom no Evil can ever proceed; and that all his Works are accompanied with Truth, and all sorts of Perfections: And that he can never do any (l) imperfect thing; and therefore you ought not to wish that any thing were otherwise than he has appointed it; for all the Wise Men who are, were, or shall be upon the Earth, cannot have all together the least Wisdom of God, and all that they have, they have from him. Is not this general Rule sufficient to make your Spirit submit to these Ordinances, especially as to this Free-will of Men, which he has given them as a Pledge of assurance that they are his real Children, in acknowledgment of which they ought to bless and praise him day and night, because he could never testify more Love to them than by this liberty he has given them to love him. For my part I can say in truth, that I would chuse rather that God should annihilate me than take from me the Liberty to love him. Therefore I resent it so much when I hear it said, *That it would be better not to have Free-will*; for I feel by Experience that it is the only thing that unites Men to God, and that also which (n) can make them enjoy Eternal Happiness; no body can comprehend (but he who experiences it) what Consolation the Soul receives (p) when it can unite this Free-Will to God. This is so perfect an Alliance, that nothing can be found in Grace more accomplish'd, no more than there can be any thing found in Nature more perfect, than that two Persons united in their Wills in God, join also in Body, this compleats their Contentment; but if there were force, limitation or constraint on either side, the Pleasure could not be compleat, This is the Figure of the perfectly free Union that the Soul ought to have with God; and if the Soul were constrain'd, or forc'd to this union, God could not take perfect delight in it,

(l) Deut. 32. 4. Ps. 33. 4. (m) VVisd. 9. 6, 17. (n) Is. 1. 19. (o) 1 Cor. 2. 14. (p) Cant. 7. 12. 8. 6, 7. because

because to have a compleat Contentment in the Union of two things, they must needs equally concur to it.

I said to her, *That I must confess I had been in great Darknes, and that I had never conceiv'd that so great a Good did proceed from Free-will, no more than the happiness which is found in Marriage, when two Persons are united in Body and in Mind.*

She said, This is because People consider things only superficially, and on the outside, without piercing into their Sources, for, (q) it is the Free-will of Man only that gives him a perfect Union with God, without which he could never come to love him perfectly, therefore among all the Spiritual Graces that God has imparted to him, this Free-Will is the greatest good, as also Marriage among natural Goods is the most perfect; though Men do very frequently abuse both, making use of their Free-Will to damn themselves, and of Marriage to sin. This is not God's Fault, who has ordained both the one and the other holy and perfect; but only Man's, who abuses the most perfect Gifts of God, as well in Grace as in Nature. Ought we for this to desire that he had not bestowed these Graces on Man? This would be to own that Man's Wickedness should make the Goodness of God to cease, which cannot be, for God will never cease to be good, because Man is evil. He remains still the Fountain of all Goodness(r) and the giver of all Good, though the men of the World be wicked. God will never change for the Goodness or Wickedness of Men, nor for any other thing, because he continues always that which he is. Let Man do what he will, with all the other Creatures, they shall never be able to make God desist from the least Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth, which he possesseth in himself, and will always exercise without regard to the goodness or wickedness of Men. Their abuse(s) of his Graces will never hinder him from extending his Goodness towards them: If they use them well, they shall receive the promised reward,

(q) Deut. 30. 19. Eccles. 5. 17, 18. (r) Jam. 1. 17.

(s) Lam. 3. 22. Math 5. 45.

and if they they use them ill, they shall meet with the just Punishment, without any mutability in God. It pleased God to Create Man after his Likeness, and so he was made, for God's Power is equal (1) to his Will; and he would have this Man also joined to his Like, as God was to him, that is to say, entirely, spiritually, and bodily. Now Man could not be like to God by his humanity; for God was not corporeal or natural; neither could he be like to God by a bounded and limited Will and Spirit, because God has a free Power to do, or not to do any thing: God then must needs have given to Man the same free Power of his Will, or otherwise he could not be like to him in any thing. And since he would create Man after his own Likeness, he was obliged to give him the free disposal of his own will, there being nothing else in which he could resemble God. By which we see that Free-Will is the greatest spiritual Gift that Man has receiv'd from God, since without it he could not any way resemble Him. And afterwards to render this resemblance most compleat, God took a natural Body, and a reasonable Soul, like to Man, that he might in all respects resemble him, that is divinely by the free Power of his Will, and after the manner of Man, by the Body and Soul which Jesus Christ assumed in due time, that not only Man might be like God, but that also God might be like to Man, that there might be a perfect and compleat Contentment between God and Man, which will appear after the end of all Evil; when God shall reign with Men on Earth, Divinity and Humanity together joining themselves inseparably by an indissoluble and eternal alliance of Will, Body, and Spirit, by a perfect Bond and Union. This is the final Cause for which God became Man, that they might dwell together in an Eternal holy Union, the figure of which he shew'd in the Earthly Paradise when he created the Woman to give Adam (u) his compleat and perfect contentment; for though indeed he had been created with his Free-will to be able to love God, and take delight in him,

(1) *VVisd.* 2. 18. (u) *Gen.* 12. 18.

and also in all the Creatures which were made subject to him, yet his Contentment was not fully perfect; for God was to be the delight of his Soul, and all the other Creatures of his Senses. But his Body did not see its like; therefore God says, (x) *It is not good for Man to be alone, let us make a help like to him*: Because God will make all his Works perfect in all respects. He is not satisfied to have created *Adam* in the enjoyment of his Free-will, by which he might have his VWill united to God's; he gives him also all beautiful things to recreate his Sight, and all savoury things to recreate his taste; all pleasant things for his hearing; all things necessary for his Entertainment, and he will needs also give him a Companion suitable to his Person, that both as to Body and Soul, he might have perfect Contentment, compleat in all respects, therefore he instituted Marriage, that the Souls which are united together by will in God, might be also united in Body; and that Man by this Figure might see how compleat and perfect the Union must be that he must have with God in all respects, and without any defect.

The Third Conference.

Speaks of the Perfection, and of the abuse of Marriage.

I said to her that Marriage was very holily instituted, but that it was very ill observ'd because no body observes narrowly the works of God.

She said, Sir, this (y) is the cause why the VWorld is condemned: for God is no longer known nor lov'd

(x) *Gen. 2. 18.* (y) *Isa. 5. 12, 13.*

in it : and no body is sensible of this Fault. They use their Free-will to satisfy themselves ; every one willing and desiring that which is pleasant to his Senses, or advantageous for his Interest in this VWorld. They will all that which God does not will ; and notwithstanding they hope to be saved, and make a contrary use of all that God has given us. Marriage is a Holy thing, and may well be called a *Sacrament*, for God has instituted it ; and all that he has done is Sacred and Holy. But what do we see in the use of this Sacrament, but the Sin of Lust and filthiness, people carrying more disorderly in it than the Brute Beasts ? They joyn Bodies, when their Desires and Wills are far divided. The ends for which God instituted it are no longer regarded by married Persons. It is their only desire to satisfy their Lust or Avarice. For the rest they only mind it but by accident. And as there is nothing more holy and perfect than the Bond of Marriage for two Persons who have dedicated their Wills to God, because it unites three things which make now but one, to wit, the will of God, and the wills of the Married Persons, who by excess of their united VVills unite also Bodies in the Spirit and Design of God ; so on the contrary, there can be nothing more wicked than two Bodies united by Carnal Concupiscence : for this Alliance is the source of all sorts of Sins, yea, the Abyss of all Evils : And as those who are united to God, have, by being married with a Person equally united to God, a perfect Contentment both of Soul and Body ; so those who live after their own will, have, by marrying with their Like, still some discontent both of Body and Soul, because their Souls not being in God they cannot have Peace, and their Bodies being joyn'd without Love, cannot be satisfied nor contented, but they are in Body and Soul as in a temporal Hell, which prepares the way to Hell Eternal ; for these Bodies united without Souls and VVills can produce nothing but Sin through the Lust of the Flesh, besides Contention and Strife, with a thousand other kinds of Excess, Vain-glory, Luxury, gluttony, to which Married Persons excite one another. So that their whole Life is nothing but a constant
course

course of sinning, which extends also to their children, thro' the bad example of the Parents, who train them up in evil customs, and they increase the number of the wicked. Hereby the world grew still worse, and its wickedness is still increased, and the perverse generation is become so numerous, that the Evil is without Remedy; for no body is aware of it, because every one treads the same path: Custom is changed into Nature. And whereas they ought to marry for the Two Ends that God gave them; that is, to preserve a perfect Unity among his true Children, and to increase the number of them by generation, they usually marry to satisfy their Concupiscence; and so they beget Children for the profit of the Devil. Thus the works of God are perverted by evil practices; for of all that God has done in Nature, there is nothing more holy than the Matrimonial Conjunction, which by a perfect Union binds persons in Love: for otherwise, God might have made men engender as the Fishes, or in any other separate manner, which his Almighty Power and Wisdom could have provided for. But resolving to have in Nature a figure of the Union of his Three Powers, and of the entire and perfect Alliance which he would make with man, he ordain'd, that their generation should be by the conjunction of two persons; that he might keep them always inseparably united to his will in body and will, by a Bond of Charity; and gave them a natural bent and inclination to this conjunction, which is the most perfect thing in the world, if it were observed in the spirit of charity.

I said to her, *That it must be acknowledg'd no body understood the works of God, and that they made an ill use of all, especially of this Matrimonial Conjunction, from whence so many sins did proceed; and instead of regarding it as an holy thing, it was matter of shame and blushing amongst the most sober persons.*

She said, Sir, 'Tis sin that renders it shameful, even as that of Adam made him see his Nakedness (2), and gave him ground, thro' confusion, to hide and cover himself. If he had remain'd in innocency, he would never have been ashamed of being Naked; but it was his sin only

(2) Gen. 3. 7.

that caused this shame: He had no need of covering himself before he sinn'd, for his body was more beautiful, and more artificially contriv'd than ever the most costly Stuffs, with which he could cover himself; but the imagination being disorder'd by sin, made him see beautiful things as if they had been filthy. This has remain'd even till now in the imagination of all men, who esteem that to be good and beautiful which they imagine to be so; and reckon that also to be filthy and evil which seems so to their imagination. Hence it comes that they look on natural things as shameful; but if they regarded them in Truth and Innocence, all would seem good and beautiful to them; for God could never make any thing evil; but man perverts all good into evil, and by his sin corrupts all things; the most innocent become the most wicked by sin. It must be acknowledged, Sir, that the way in which men now joyn for generation, is very filthy, and makes chaste souls blush, because they observe nothing there but the sin which is in it, which is infamous: For this cause they are asham'd of it: But if this sin were remov'd, they would see nothing in it but what is pleasant; as if two little children should play together quite naked; there would be nothing but pleasure in this, because of their innocence; but if they did the same things when grown up, it would be infamous, because of the malignity of their thoughts. A thing that is in it self the same, is render'd good or evil by the wickedness of the Heart. The sins that are committed in Marriage, do not proceed from its being evil in it self; for it is good: but they are introduc'd there thro' the perverse will of men. Even as the Church is holy in it self, but man's perverse will has render'd it abominable in the sight of God; for they have chang'd the Order into which God had established it. And if men commit the greatest sins by the inclination they have to this natural conjunction, this proceeds from nothing but the wickedness of the Heart, since the thing in it self is good and holy. If man is become so negligent as to abuse all the works of God, is it not thro' his own wickedness that he perishes, tho he lays the blame always on God? For if he sin through Carnal Lust, he will say, *wherefore has God given me this Natural Inclination, by which I am led to sin?* And if men be chastised by any

any Rods, they will say, that God afflicts them, or that he has forsaken them ; and so of all other things : How great soever mens wickedness be, they lay the blame always on God ; tho they do not say it by word, yet they do it in deed, while they neglect to discover, that all his works are still (a) accompanied with Righteousness, Goodness and Truth ; and that nothing that is evil can ever come from God, who is the (b) Source and Original of all Good, still doing good to all, without excepting any. By which we see evidently, that he is no longer known at present ; for they abuse all his Favours, and blaspheme him in every thing, and yet are not willing to confess it ; for every one of these Christians have it in their mouths, that they love God and honour him ; (c) while truly and in effect they disown and blaspheme him by their works.

(a) *Psal.* 36. 9, 10. (b) *Jam.* 1. 17. (c) *Tit.* 1. 16.

The Fourth Conference.

Of the blindness of men, who amuse themselves with the outward things which are delivered to them, without searching into the depth of the Truth it self, they are so infatuated and withheld, thro' the fear of displeasing those who are in Reputation.

I said to her, *That men were in horrible darkness, and that the Truth was no longer known, but every one had forsaken it, and taken a quite contrary way, while in the mean time they think they are in the right way.*

She said, Sir, This is what I bewail continually, to see men so far from their salvation, and yet they think they are in the right way to it. This causes the Damna-

tion of those who are esteem'd the best men; for while they think they are good, they will not endeavour after a Change, but will live and die in a presumption of being sav'd without good works; which shall not be forgiven neither in this world nor in the other: and no body thinks on't; for the darkness is so thick, that they cannot see whither they go. Truth is always bright, and discovers every thing, but it is no longer known. No body knows the Truth any more, since the Devil spread this horrible Darkness on the Earth; but every one walks in darkness, and believes he is in the right way; and while they are perishing they think to be saved. Have you not observ'd, Sir, all that I have said to you, that man knows not God any longer, nor his works; and that they understand them in a quite contrary sense, and that in truth they observe nothing of what God has commanded, and Jesus Christ taught, and yet every one says, that he desires to come to God? Must there not be a lie in the one or the other of these two contrary things? For what I say, and what Men do, are as distant from one another, as heat is from cold. Nevertheless truth cannot change, it remains always true: Let Men say what they please, let them stray from it, or approach it, it abides still firm in its Integrity. Who that understands me aright can doubt that I speak the Truth? And if you are oblig'd to confess it, will you not consequently be oblig'd to acknowledge that all the World is deceived, and fallen from the Truth, and in forsaking it they have forsaken God? And if they have forsaken God who can uphold them any longer? The World must certainly perish, for its disease is at the height; and the worst of all is, that they do not know it; for if they knew it, there would yet be some among them, who would open their Eyes, and perceive the reality of Truth.

I ask'd her, from whence this great blindness of Spirit, and this so obscure darkness could proceed?

She said, Sir, this comes from the Devil, since he crept into the Church, and began to countermine the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and took the title of Anti-christ; he has labour'd so strongly in this, that he has spread among them an universal Darkness, and so confounded the Spirits of those Christians with so ma-

ny different things, that they are no longer capable of knowing the Truth. Instead of it he has inspir'd them with a great many false Opinions, that he might divert them from the pure Truth. So that I do not believe there is any Sect or Nation in the World farther from it than the Christians of this Age, because they discover it no longer in any thing: whereas the Hereticks, Jews, or Heathens, know the Truth in some things, tho. in others they are mistaken: but these Christians are mistaken in all, thro' the ill use they make of all things, as I have formerly told you, Sir, that they know neither God nor any of his works, judging of all in a quite contrary sense. And because they could not have quiet without doing good things, the Devil has furnish'd them with so many seemingly good works, that they have no longer any leisure to think of the Truth, and to examine whether these New Devotions be true or not: but they blindly follow them without making any other Reflection, but that they are the Ordinances of the Church; without examining also, whether this Church be holy or not, they lay aside the Truth to receive that which is proposed to them, supposing it to be a good thing. Hence (d) there is such blindness of spirit, and such obscure darkness, that there is scarce any way to make them see the Truth, their understanding being so preoccupied and darkned with diverse things, that they can no longer consider the Unity of Truth; on the contrary, they would think they did evil to follow this Truth, and quit the New Practices introduc'd by men. So that if we should advise a Christian now a-days to do nothing else in order to his salvation, but to resign his will to that of God, he would think we design'd to make him an Heretick; and would cleave more firmly to the Ordinances of the Church than to those of God.

I ask'd her, *Whether she was a Catholick, and whether one could be sav'd out of the holy Church?*

She said, Yes, Sir, I am a Catholick, and ready to die for the Faith and Doctrine of Jesus Christ; because 'tis necessary for me. If I had remain'd in innocence,

(d) 2 *Thes.* 2. 10, 11, 12.

without having contracted so many evil habits by the conversation of men, (e) I should not have needed the Law of God, nor the Precepts of Jesus Christ; but having departed from that innocence in which I ought to have resign'd my self wholly to God, yielding up to him the free will that he gave me, I have need now of this Law, and those Evangelical Counsels, as means to recover that innocence; and that I may with singleness of heart resign my will to that of God; as all other men also have need of them; for every one has departed from that innocence, and contracted many evil habits, which hinder this resignation to God. I embrace indeed the Apostolical Faith and Belief; but I do not believe many things which those who call themselves the Christian Church lay before us; because they are not true; for he who should believe to be sav'd by going to Church, and frequenting the Sacraments, or such like things, would at death find himself deceiv'd, because no Prayers or Sacraments operate without (f) an inward disposition: And whereas we see people frequent the Churches and Sacraments without piety or devotion, we may well judge that the world is deceived by such like things, while they place the hopes of their salvation on outward things, which are but the signification of the inward disposition of the mind (g). You will say, It may be, Sir, that the Church supposes this inward disposition; which is a false supposition; because we see evidently by experience, that the inward disposition is very far from what appears outwardly: and upon this supposition the Church could not appoint the baptising of new born Infants, who are not at all capable of inward dispositions. I doubt not but these Romanists would bring many Reasons and Arguments; but I hold to the Truth of God, and know no other Church but the souls which possess the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, Lo (h) this is the only true Church out of which there can be no salvation (i); for every one has need of taking up these means, that by them he may attain to a RESIGNATION to God.

(e) *Mat.* 9. 12. (f) *Joh.* 4. 24 (g) *1 Pet.* 3. 21. (h) *Joh.* 3. 1. (i) *Joh.* 2. 2.

I said to her, *That truly there must be some infatuation of Spirit that tied us to this Church: for tho we see she does not at all possess the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, yet we are afraid to leave her, as if she were the holy Church; tha the truth makes it evidently appear that she is not.*

She said, Sir, I bless God that he opens your Eyes to discover the truth in what concerns your salvation; for as long as you do not discover evil, you cannot avoid it, but will still be in danger of being deceived by it. If the Devil were not in this Church, it is impossible that so many good spirits should thus blindly follow her. 'Tis certainly by an infatuation of the understanding; for they see enough in the outside to judg assuredly that she is not guided by the holy spirit, and that she follows not in any respect the Doctrine of Jesus Christ; and nevertheles they continue so wedded to her thro' som panick or pusillanimous Fear, that they dare not shake off her dependance, fearing they should do evil in following the truth: And if any person of a sound Judgment discovers her deceits, and uncharms his Understanding, so as to perceive her Errors, yet out of respect to the Glory of the World he dare not forsake her, because this Church is advanc'd to so great Honour and Authority, that no body dares leave her, for fear of being disgrac'd or persecuted by her, as she would certainly do so long as it is in her power. For this cause Jesus Christ, speaking of the last Times, in which we are fallen, says, (k) That a man must get out of Judea, and flee, even without returning to his house to take his Cloaths. Judea is the Church and the Sanctuary, where the abomination of desolation is now so increas'd that it is at its heighth. A man needs not glory in being a Son of the Church: for the Children shall be cast out of the Kingdom of Heaven (l); and the Jews and (m) Heathens shall be admitted into it; for God can make of these Stones Children of Abraham (n). Lay aside therefore, Sir, all these Fears and Pusillanimities; they proceed from a softness of spirit. Keep close to the Truth, and follow her without Fear; for she will guide you to salvation. If Glory or Interest do not hold you in a de-

(k) *Mark* 13. 14, 15, 16. (l) *M.* 18. 12. (m) *Rom.* 11. 26, 31. (n) *Mat.* 3. 9.

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pendance on the Church, leave her boldly; for her Reign will be very shortly at an end, and she will perish with all her Glory and Possessions. 'Tis better lose our Garments than our Life, or even our Wealth and Honour, than our souls.

The Fifth Conference.

Of the Destruction of Christendom.

I Said to her, That I was not so afraid as she thought, and that I had ask'd many things of her, of which I made no doubt: but I desir'd always to be further cleared, and therefore propos'd many questions; Yet on the contrary I had long suspected that the Church was the Whore in the Revelations(o); in which her behaviour had confirm'd me; therefore would flee out of her Dependance.

She said, 'Twill be your best course; for her time draws near, in which she (p) shall be raz'd and rooted out, and her Children scatter'd and divided. All the World shall bewail her, and call her miserable; for her misery shall be great, and all her Villanies shall be discover'd. It would be then too late to forsake her: for all those who shall be found drinking out of her Cup shall perish with her. Therefore Jesus Christ has said, That we must not wait (r) till the winter, or the Sabbath-day; That is, till the time of persecution, and the Day of the coming of Jesus Christ in his glory: for in her persecution there will be so great evils, that the like (s) were never seen; (t) Men shall pine away for Terror and Fear, and be very incapable of studying how to find the Truth; Therefore you must not wait till the time of extremity, but flee and get out of her before. Neither must you wait till the Day when our Saviour shall come in his

(o) Rev. 18. 4. (p) Rev. 17. 16. 18. 2. (r) Mat. 24. 26.
(s) Mat. 24. 21. (t) Luke 21. 26.

Conf.V. Of the Destruction of Christendom. 25

Glory, because he (u) will render to every one according to his works; the time of penitence shall be past: it must be done presently, or else we shall all perish. For the Lord (x) will overthrow all evil by the brightness of his coming, which is to be looked for only in order to receive our last Judgment, for which it is more than time to prepare our selves, and to flee to the Mountains, taking heed of men, who have for so long deceived and abused us, to the prejudice of the salvation of our souls. We must no longer trust in any body; for all have left and forsaken their God: tho some remain still in the Faith, nevertheless they are not in the works of Faith; for the Jews with Faith have not the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, which is the work of Faith; and the Christians have no more Faith, and shall not recover it, since Jesus Christ says, (y) *That at his coming he shall not find Faith in Israel.* They are of the House of Israel, and the people of God, who nevertheless have denied his Faith, and given it to men only.

I ask'd her, *To what place I ought to flee, since the whole world was judged, and the Plagues would be universal? That I might put my self in greater danger in the place to which I should flee, than in that which I had left.*

She said, Flee first out of the Dominions of Rome, Sir; for that place will be first of all destroyed; God ordering all his affairs with Judgment*, Weight (z), and Measure. He will visit first of all those who have most offended him. Justice regulates all things; and because Christians have more treacherously offended him than any others, they have drawn on themselves the first Vengeance. All others will follow the order (a) of their iniquities; as they grow worse in wickedness, accordingly they shall be nearer their punishment. It is fit always to retire into places where the abomination is less; There the Chastisements will be less; tho (b) indeed no place shall be exempted from Plagues, because all parts of the world have deserv'd them; Nevertheless they shall be inflicted only according (c) as every one has merited, and

(u) *Mat.* 16. 27. (x) *Pf.* 72. & *Pf.* 75. (y) *Luk.* 18. 8. (*) *Pf.* 119. 37. (z) *Wisd.* 11. 21. (a) *Rom.* 2. 9. (b) *Is.* 24. 1-6--17, 18, 19. *Hab.* 3. 5--18 (c) *Rev.* 18. 6.

deserved them, and no further ; for sins beget (d) miseries, and they proceed not from God, as they would make us believe; because no Evils come from God, who alone is the Author of all good : So that all the *good* that we see and feel, comes always from God; and all the *evil* that we see and feel, comes always from sin ; and as the *goodness* of God continually brings forth *good things*, so the malignity of sin continually brings forth *evil things*; and (e) as sins increase, evils increase the more. Hence it comes that the Plagues are universal, because the sins are so ; for as long as there were places where God was yet honour'd on Earth, he bore with others, waiting for their Repentance ; and the universal Plagues shall not fall out so long as there are any who have not deserv'd them ; For God is too just to afflict (f) a righteous person, or to chastise one that is innocent. That is but the manner of unrighteous men ; but God always exercises Righteousness both as to the *good* and to the *evil*. However men imagine that God sends his Plagues, they are deceived ; for nothing but sin can bring them on, and produce them. According as men Offend, their Evils increase.

I said to her ; that these were most excellent Truths, that no evil could come from God, and that nevertheless nobody did comprehend this.

She said, Sir, the reason is, Men do not know the Righteousness, the Goodness, and the Truth of God ; but they judg blindly of all they see, according to their Passions. If they knew the righteousness of God, they could never think of praying that God would keep off his last Plagues ; (g) for they would see that they will never fall out but when sin shall be universal, because God is perfectly Righteous ; but because we do not conceive this Righteousness, we believe that there are yet many good men in the world, because they seem so to us. In this we give a tacite Reproof to God ; for if our belief were true, that there were yet at present so many good men in the VWorld as we are perswaded there are, God would

(d) Jer. 2. 19. e) Rev. 18. 4, 5. (f) Gen. 18. 23, 25.
(g) John 17. 9.

Conf. IV. *Of the Destruction of Christendom.* 27

be unjust to send on us so many different miseries as we feel at present. If he would have forgiven them in *Abraham's* time provided (h) he could have shewn him but ten righteous Persons, yea, even fewer, how could he chastise the VWorld now, if there were so great a number in it as we believe there are? Is he not the same God still? And has he not the same goodness since he cannot change? Truly Sir, men mistake God in every thing; and through this mistake, they utter reproaches against him, and blaspheme against his Righteousness, goodness, and Truth; particularly Christians, who with their seeming Piety lay the blame on God of all their mis-deeds. Is not this horrible darkness, since they choose rather to charge God with their Faults, than discover them by the Truth, that they might repent of them? Truly Sir, the power of Darkness is great, that it can so obscure all the Men of the VWorld, that no body knows the Truth any longer, and even the most part shut their Eyes that they may not discover it, and in so doing they think they do well. The *Egyptian* Darkness was far less dangerous, for it was felt, and they durst not stir, (k) out of the place. for fear of falling; but those Christians now do not perceive their Darkness, or their Errours; on the contrary (l) they think they are in the Light, and condemn others who see more clearly than themselves. By what means should the Children of the Kingdom be saved, when they take lying for Truth, which they reject as an evil thing.

I said to her, that nevertheless truth was a very lovely thing; and as for my self, I would follow it as far as I could discover it.

She said, You will discover it sufficiently, if you love it; for the holy Spirit, who is now born into the World, will discover it to all those who shall search for it; but there are few among the Christians who would receive it, tho' it offer it self first of all to their Eyes, because they are so full of Errors and Superstitions, that they will not make way for

(h) *Gen.* 18. 30. (i) *Jam.* 1. 17. (k) *Exod.* 10. 23.

(l) *Rev.* 3. 17. and 18. 7.

this truth which is lovely. They live in a presumption of their Salvation, yea, they condemn all the World to Damnation, because it does not follow their Laws, though in the mean time they be but humane, and no ways divine Laws. And whereas God says, *(m)* that he resists the proud, and gives Grace to the humble; he who is Truth *(n)* will resist them, even as they resist the Truth, which is God. But, if for your part, Sir, you do it, and will follow it, you shall obtain the happiness of reigning with Jesus Christ in Glory. But without Faith you cannot be saved; for if you do not believe that the World is Judged, you are not in the light of Truth; because the deportment of Men is a certain Evidence of it, since we see them without Repentance and Amendment; and if you do not believe that we live now in the Reign of Antichrist, you will assuredly be deceived; For under the covert of Holiness *be will deceive the Elect*, *(o)* if it were possible; and if you do not believe that Jesus Christ shall come to reign on the Earth with Men, *(p)* to render Justice to every one, and to root out all Evil, and recompence *(q)* the sufferings of the Righteous; without this persuasion you can never support the Evils which hang over our Head; for without knowing these Truths, it will be impossible not to fall into despair or murmuring against God, if we know not his Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth, with which he does all things. Thus we cannot be saved *(r)* without Faith, which discovers the Truth. All these things are true of Judgment, of Antichrist, and of the coming of Jesus Christ in Glory; but if you will not believe them, you resist the known Truth, which is a Sin against the Holy-Ghost, that shall never be forgiven.

(m) 1 Pet. 5. 5. *(n)* Job. 14. 6. *(o)* Math. 24. 24. *(p)* Ps. 96. 13. Hab. 3. Rev. 5. 10. 11. 17, 18. 20. 4. &c. *(q)* *ibid.* 2 Tim. 2. 12. *(r)* Heb. 10. 37, 38.

The Sixth Conference.

*Discovers the Signs that the World is Judged,
and that ANTICHRIST Reigns now.*

I said to her, I would be very careful not to commit any Sin against the Holy Ghost, though I know not yet the Truth in every thing, entreating she would afford the means to discover the Truth of all the things she told me, to wit, the Judgment, the Reign of Antichrist, and the coming of Jesus Christ in Glory.

She said, You would infallibly believe them, if you would seriously remark what you may see with your Eyes, and conceive with your Humane Understanding; for these things are so far advanced, that one may feel them, provided his Mind be not infatuated. For first, as to the Judgment, as I have already told you, it is easy to see that the world is Judged, because sins are universal, and no body will Repent. There is every where (s) *the Lust of the Eyes, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life*; of which no body Repents and Amends; and there can be no forgiveness, where there is no amendment; and therefore of necessity the World is Judged, because these evils are not among some particular persons, as they have been in all times; but they are generally among all men, both small and great: If you observe them narrowly, you will find, Sir, that these three sins reign infallibly in the Hearts of all men, of whatsoever condition; those in whom you cannot discover them, are very often the greatest Hypocrites, who know better to dissemble and cover their sins. And for the second, The believing that we are now in the Reign of Antichrist, you need only Remark narrowly by what

s) 1 John 2. 16.

Spirit Men are led, because they who are led by God, follow his Righteousness, (s) his Goodness and his Truth: On the contrary, they who are led by the Devil, oppose themselves to this; and if you Reflect upon the Actions of Men now, you will find nothing in them but *Injustice, Malice and Lying*, which are three qualities of the Devil, opposed to the *Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth of God*: This is so common at present, that there is nothing to be seen but Injustice, Malice, and affected Lies.

I said to her, *in my opinion there were some men who seemed to follow Righteousness and Truth; tho it must be acknowledged the greatest part live in Injustice and Deceit.*

She said, Sir, Judge (u) righteously, and examin every thing to the bottom. You grant already that the greatest part of men now live in Injustice and lies. All the World finds this by experience: And when the greatest part is for the Devil, we may well fear that he will shortly have the whole; for as rotten Apples spoil the sound ones, (x) so Men corrupted by the Devil, are still corrupting and drawing in those who are yet sound. If all men in general, or almost all, were on the Devils side, the Reign of Antichrist would be at an end, for he could gain no more; he would be pleased to have all his Adherents with him, to Hell; for the reason why he keeps them in Life here, and raises them to places and preferments, is, that they may serve him in corrupting others, and in doing all the mischief to the good that may be. Now there would be no need of this, if all in general were dedicated to his service; he could go no farther; and God would not continue the World in being to wait for men's Conversion; for those who are Dedicated to the Devil, will not be converted, as some other sinners would be who have not yet renounc'd God, nor given their Souls to the Devil, as his sworn Votaries or Sorcerers do, who are precisely dedicated to the Devil of their own free will; as the greatest part of men have done. This may appear sufficiently by their Malice, which is not only human, but Devilish also; for human Malice

(s) Eph. 4. 9. (u) John 7. 24. (x) 1 Cor. 15. 33.
extends

extends it self no farther than to that which is pleasant or profitable to the Malicious Person ; but at present we see men's Malice so black, that he who acts it, has neither pleasure nor profit by it ; and nevertheless they afflict the good, and ruin sometimes the wealth and honour of their Neighbour, without any profit to themselves : And lies are so common, tho frequently without any advantage, that the truth is seldom or never spoken, from whence it appears, that it certainly comes from the Devil, for men could not arrive at such a malice as that is, which we see now reign in the World.

If I told you, Sir, that I had these truths by any particular Revelation from God, you would entertain, it may be, some scrupulous doubts about it ; but I refer you to your own experience, that you may know by human Reasons, that we are fallen into the last times, that the Judgment is past on the whole World ; And that this is now the Reign of Antichrist. For *as to the coming of Jesus Christ in Glory*, I cannot make it appear to you so precisely, as the things that are already come to pass ; but if you read attentively the Holy Scriptures, they will plainly enough declare it to you ; for of all contain'd in them, there is (y) nothing more spoken of, than of the coming of Jesus Christ on Earth in Glory : (z) From the beginning of the World we are told, that Jesus Christ was to become man to Reign with men on Earth ; and tho he had not been man to suffer, he had become man to Reign : Because he would take and give to men a perfect contentment of (a) Conversing together with them in Body and Soul, Divinity and Humanity. I cannot make you see this, Sir, by the Eyes of the Body, because the time is not yet come : Therefore I send you to the Holy Scriptures. But as for the Judgment and the Reign of Antichrist, you may see it with your Eyes, and comprehend it with your Natural understanding : For it is visible and comprehensible by him whose Spirit is not infatuated, and who seeks to discover the Truth. The thing is so manifest, that it speaks out it

(y) See Ps. 50. 72 75 96 97 98. Isa. 40. &c. (z) Ps. 40. 8, Heb. 10. 5, 7. (a) 2 Cor. 6. 16. Rev. 21. 3.

self: Many say blindly, *We are in the end of the World*, and they perceive not that they speak truth: Others say, *The Devil reigns over all*, and they see not that this is the Reign of Antichrist, who Rules as Universal Emperour of the whole world: They Judge by the effects, without searching into the cause. The Devil hinders this, for he well knows that if the cause were discovered, many would be Converted; therefore he darkens their minds, that they may never come to the Knowledge of the Truth, because it would confound him.

I said to her, *I perceived clearly enough that the world was Judged, because sin abounds in it, and no body will be Converted: But that we were in the Reign of Antichrist, I did not perceive so clearly, for we have always been taught, that he shall be a Visible and corporal man.*

She said, Sir, it is well that you see the World is Judged. You shall perceive the rest sufficiently, for the Reign of Antichrist is yet more manifest. Antichrist, that is to say, against Christ. He whose understanding is not darkened may easily see, if men follow Christ, or if they go in a way contrary to what he walked in while he was on Earth: And you see that Christians nowadays live a quite other Life than what Jesus Christ led, and they not only do not follow him at a distance, but are directly opposite to him; for there Pride Reigns, instead of Humility; and Avarice, instead of Poverty; and instead of Charity, there is nothing but Envy; and so of all the other things which Christ Jesus Taught us; They act wholly in opposition to him, and they do not consider that all that is contrary to Christ, is Assuredly Antichrist. The time is come wherein men would fain have a God and Devil Visible to their Eyes, that might go before them. This is great and thick darkness; because neither God, nor the Devil are visible; For (b) they are Spirits, who cannot be known but by their Operations, when they are good or evil, according to the Spirit that Animates them. Hereby we shall know by what Spirit the World is animated at present; For the Spirit of God is always Just, Good and True; (c) and that of the Devil is always evil, without Righte-

(b) Joh. 4. 24. Eph. 6. 12. (c) Eph. 5. 9.

ousness, and without Truth. By these real Signs, we may certainly discern if Christ rules the World, or Antichrist: We need not go to consult Oracles to make this Discovery; for all Men of good judgment, may make a sufficient trial, and see it with their Eyes, and feel it with their Hands, by taking the Marks which discover the solid truth: For if they will needs make this discovery by the signs of apparent Vertues, they will remain in their Darkness; because the Devil has so disguised and coloured his wickedness with outward Devotions and Piety, that he thereby deceives all the World. We must come to the Essence of Vertue, to see if it be God or the Devil, who animates these outward Devotions; for if they be of God, they will always be accompanied with Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth. But we see but too much the contrary; for the most part of those Devout Persons at present, are without Righteousness or Equity: There was never seen so much going to Church, receiving the Sacraments, and so little Fidelity; so many *Pater nosters*, and so little Truth; so many good Words, and so little true Charity. Do you not see, Sir, that all order of Justice is renvers'd, and that there is more regard of doing Justly before Men, than before God? And yet these are the best now, who do justly before Men; for the most part deceive and deal unfaithfully, as well before Men as before God: For Iniquity is become so common, that now almost they are not ashamed to commit it publickly. If a man go to Church, (d) and frequent the Sacraments, he passes for a good Man, though he be no ways just. If we consider well all the Qualities of the Devil, we shall see them all practis'd in the behaviour of Men now; he is a Liar, an Hypocrite and Unconstant, a Deceiver and Unfaithful, abounds in all kind of Malice, Proud, Arrogant, Envious, Contentious, without Faith or Honesty, Obstinate in Malice, and in a desperate Rage: These Qualities are but too much practis'd by the most part of Christians; and yet we perceive not that this is now the Reign of Antichrist! Men must be extremely blinded, that they do not see this more clear than

(d) Jer. 8. 12. (e) 2 Tim. 3. 6.

the Day ; because the evil is too manifest. But many Minds are so infatuated, that they cannot believe what they perceive so manifestly by their Understandings, but they wait to believe this Antichrist, till they shall see him in a Humane Form : Which is a very small matter, in respect of his Doctrine ; for that Body can never cause Damnation to our Souls, as his Doctrine will do, which being contrary to Christ, leads us to Perdition. Since Jesus Christ (g) is the way, we can never attain to Salvation but by him ; contrary ways lead to Damnation ; it matters little whether we are led into them by a Body, or by a Spirit, since we are undone as to Salvation.

I ask'd her, *If we ought not to believe, that this Antichrist will be sometime corporeally visible in a Humane Form ?*

She said, Yes, Sir, I believe this will be toward the end of his Reign ; for he has set himself to counterfeit all the Actions of Jesus Christ, and to ape what he sees he has done. And perceiving that Christ became a Natural Man, he also will move his Sorcerers to produce Men by the operation of the Devil ; which is done many times, for there are certainly many of these Antichrists born already in the World, who make great Havock in the Church, and have in their Train those who are most in Authority ; and as the Apostles of Jesus Christ laboured to introduce Truth into the World, these incarnate Devils labour to introduce Lies into it, and to sow Tares, as they did good Grain. I doubt not also, but they have a Head of their Iniquity, who will appear openly when his (h) wickedness shall be discover'd, and when he cannot deceive any longer under the Cloak of Holiness, he will deceive then by pure Wickedness, and will exercise cruelty towards all those who will not be his Followers. That time, Sir, will not be so dangerous as the present is, because he shall be known for the Devil, and now they follow him as if he were God. Therefore he keeps himself so long concealed, and does not appear bodily ; for he could not do so much prejudice to Souls, if he were known. He has spread Darkness through all the World, that no body may dis-

(f) 2 Tim. 3. 2. (g) Joh. 14. 6. (h) 2 Thes. 2. 8.

cover him, exercising all his wickedness UNDER PRETEXT OF GOOD THINGS, OR OF NATURAL OR CASUAL THINGS, that no body may believe that all the evils which we see, do come from this Antichrist, and that no body may be on his guard, because he does not appear yet in human Flesh: This blinds all the World; for tho they see all the qualities of the Devil rule in men, yet they will not believe these so solid marks, as they would do if they saw him bodily, which bodily appearance is not real: For the Devil is pure Spirit, and has not the Power of forming to himself a Body, unless it be a fantastical one, or else by the Seed of some Sorcerer, which is abominable.

I said to her, *It was not to be doubted that we live certainly in the time when Antichrist Reigns by his Doctrine and his Operations; because Men (in the general) have all, or the greatest part of them, the qualities of the Devil.*

She said, Sir, there is no reckoning to be made of any other thing, but what concerns the Salvation of Souls; for if the Devil be followed in his Doctrine and in his Works, he needs no more to make himself Master of our Souls: He'll do no more hurt to men by his Body than he does by his Spirit; and if it were not to Ape God, he would never take a Natural Body; for he knows well enough, how to make a body of Air, or some other matter, to deceive Sorcerers, whose imagination he so blinds, that they believe they see and feel some real body, tho it be only Phantastical. By this he prevails with them to commit all sorts of Evil, pretending to dwell with them, that he may still prophane the works which God has introduc'd for an Holy end. So that the Natural Body of the Devil is not so much to hurt men, as to bring Glory to the Devil, when he shall be discovered; and shall be corporally Honour'd and follow'd by all his Adherents, as Jesus Christ was by his Disciples: And that he may leave none of the works of Jesus Christ unimitated, that he may pervert them; he must also take a body of Flesh, that he may likewise Reign Bodily, thereby to consummate his wretched Kingdom, which began as soon as God became man, (i) and has still encreast, even till this pre-

(i) 2 Thes. 2: 7;

lent time, without being known, or revealed: And since God has the goodnels to Reveal him at present, he should be discovered, if it were possible, to all the world, that he may no longer deceive any body under the mask of Vertue; and that those who will needs follow him, may know what they do: For the Body of Jesus Christ went not thro' all the world in order to the forming of his Church, but he has herein only introduc'd his Doctrine, which sanctifies (*b*) the Souls of those that follow it, tho they have never seen his body; 'tis the same as to the Doctrine of the Devil, which corrupts Souls, tho they should never see his Body: They are as Diabolical in following the works of the Devil, as others are holy in imitating the actions of Jesus Christ, whose Body they never saw.

I said to her, *It was a great Loss that these Truths could not be publish'd to all the world; for all are ignorant of them, and believe there is no Antichrist until he appear in his humane Body.*

She said, Sir, 'tis lamentable that these things, so prejudicial to so many Souls, must be conceal'd; and that the Marvels of God, which are so important, cannot be discover'd. The last Times are come (c): Antichrist Reigns over all (d): And Jesus Christ (e) will come quickly to Reign here in glory: The forerunning plagues (f) of Judgment are begun; and no body will believe any thing of all this, because we cannot speak of them openly. You are the first, Sir, to whom I have declared these secrets: Make a good use of them. I shall reckon it a gain, tho none but your Soul alone should receive the Light of them. The world is deceived, and will be, while they do not open their Eyes to the Truths I have told you: They are nevertheless from God, and cannot fail; if all the world will needs ruin themselves, Sir, save your self: For tho none of these things should fall out in your Life-time, and you should not see the utmost extremities of the Plagues, nor the Body of Antichrist, nor yet the coming of Jesus Christ in Glory, yet it will be most expedient for you that you believe all these things, which will open your eyes to discover your particular faults, and the dangers in which you live, and will give you prudence

(*b*) *Joh. 17. 17.* (*c*) *1 Cor. 10. 11.* (*d*) *Rev. 13.*
(*e*) *Rev. 16. 15.* (*f*) *Math. 24. 8.*

to avoid the deceits in which we live at present. Make use of the occasion, Sir, without contending out of curiosity about words, and the times of every thing: because the Judgment still falls out (g) when we die; and it (h) will never be recall'd. Tho even there were not a general Judgment; yet there is always our particular Judgment, which precisely respects us; and if all the People of the world perisht by the Deluge, excepting eight persons, it was thro' their unbelief; for (i) if they had believed the words of *Noah*, they would have been sav'd in his Ark: Even so now those shall Perish who will not believe the Truths that I tell you from God. They shall certainly Perish in the Ship-wrack, because they will not save themselves in time, it will be in vain for them to ascend into their Houses of Honour and Glory, that they might avoid the Plagues which will follow them every where.

I said to her, *That I could not doubt any longer of the things she told me, because of the Operation of her words in my Soul, which could not but come from God: But I wish'd earnestly that many might enjoy the same effects.*

She said, Sir, Your desire will be fulfilled: for many will receive this Light, tho very few among the Christians; because they are so obstinately wedded to a presumption of their Salvation, being falsely perswaded that they shall be Saved by their frivolous Devotions. These will resist the Truth, and believe they are Holy, and Perfect, till they shall see themselves swallowed up of the Plagues; and when it shall be too late (k) they will cry for Mercy, without any hope of succour, no more than in the days of *Noah*, for it is not written that he took so much as one into the Ark after the Deluge was begun: Those who had not formerly gone in to it did all perish, even as those shall do who will not now believe that we live in the days of Antichrist. They must of necessity be deceived by him, and Perish. What remedy can there be for their evils, since they seek not to be healed, because they are insensible of them, as they would be of a Leprosie? We must flee from them that we may not contract such a dangerous malady. as

(g) *Hel* 9.27. (h) *Ecc*. 11.3. (i) *Heb*. 11.7. (k) *Prov*. 1.28.

this blindness. because they shall be destroyed (l) before they know it. *It shall be with them, (m) says Jesus Christ, as it was in the days of Noah; They Ate, they Drank, they Married, without any apprehension: Even so tho they see and feel the beginnings (n) of sorrows by Wars, they do not apprehend them to be the last Plagues; they endeavour to escape and avoid them by Human means, going from one place to another, without remembring what Christ says, (o) That two shall be grinding at one Mill, the one shall be taken, the other left, or even two in the same bed: To shew that it avails nothing for one to save his Body; but he must endeavour to be united unto God; or otherwise, he shall be taken in what place soever he go to.*

I said to her, That I would follow her even to Death, because she had the words of truth, tho all the world should withstand it.

She said, Sir, There is no need that you follow my Person, but my words; keep them in your Heart, and thereby you will attain to Salvation; for they are saving. Never turn away from them: For the Devil has this invention, to raise a great many distractions that he may divert us from following the Truth; he sends sickness, Troubles, Affairs of Importance, and a thousand other occasions, to divert our good purposes, that we may never bring them to effect. If you were speaking, Sir, with all good men who are in publick Offices, whether Civil or Ecclesiastick, they would acknowledg to you that they were never so throng'd with Affairs or Business as now; because the Devil being unable to gain them entirely to himself, he endeavours, at least, to give them so much business, as that they may not have leisure to think of their Salvation, nor of the Dangers in which they live: We must certainly discover his wiles, or otherwise he will draw us along with him insensibly. He has deceived so many by these means, making them believe that their employments were profitable for the Publick, or their Neighbours, when they serv'd for nothing but human accommodations, without any advan-

(l) 1 Thef. 5. 3. (m) Luk. 17. 26. (n) Mat. 24. 8.
 (o) Luk. 17. 34, 35.

tage to the Glory of God, or the Salvation of Souls : And under this False Perswasion many have lost their own Salvation, without procuring that of others. It is not in these last times, Sir, that Places, Offices, or Employments are saving ; it is much for a Man to save his own Soul ; for the times are too dangerous, and the world too blind and obstinate. If they perceived their blindness, they would seek to find a remedy : But while they believe they see clearly, they cannot think of a remedy, and they fall easily into eternal ruin : But if you, Sir, for your own part, would be saved, remember the Truth, and follow it, for without it there can be no Salvation : For it alone makes us to know God, and the Devil, and likewise the state of the World, and that of our own Conscience ; Truth shews us also the certain way of Salvation ; and by it all the wonders of God are discovered. It is the Light of the World, and the sure harbour of Salvation, without which nothing can be good or beautiful.

The seventh Conference.

Shews that Jesus Christ will come in Glory, or else he should not be the Saviour of the World, as he is ; and there would be no just Recompence for the Good, and for the Wicked.

I said to her, that I had sufficiently discovered the truth of this, that we are in the last times, that the World is judged, and Antichrist reigns, and also that the Plagues are begun, because there is no truth nor Righteousness among Men ; but that I did not yet see why Jesus Christ shall come to reign in Glory upon Earth.

She said, This is the most evident truth, and the greatest Goodness and Justice of God, because Jesus Christ is *the Saviour of the World*, (p) and *the restorer* (q) of all things. You see clearly by all the Truths that I have told you, that very few will be saved of all those who live at present after the usual manner; and if this miserable World should last yet longer, there (r) would still be fewer, because every day it grows worse. How therefore should Jesus Christ be the Saviour of the World, if he did not restore all things? No body could be Saved; for the whole World perishes. There must come a time (s) that the whole World shall be saved, that he may be fitly called the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD. And this cannot be in Heaven as People imagine, because all who enter there shall be Saved, having received Salvation at the hour of Death; and this respects only particular persons, who by reason of their small number cannot well be called the WORLD, because it consists in a Generality, and not in some particular Persons. 'Tis a truth therefore that in a certain time (t) Jesus Christ will save all the World in general: This will be at his coming in Glory, when (u) he shall have judged the World and condemned the Wicked, he will save the Good with all (x) their Posterity, who can never perish any more, because of the continual Presence of Jesus Christ, God and Man, who (y) will govern and lead them to Salvation. This his coming in Glory is also necessary (z) to restore all things, because there has been no reparation yet of all the Injuries and Affronts that were done to his Humanity: His low Condition has not been raised up; his Poverty has not been enriched; his Tears have not been wiped away; his Humility has not been exalted; neither have any other of his Contempts

(p) 1 Joh. 4. 14. (q) Ps. 75. 3, 4. Act. 3. 21. (r) Matth. 24. 22. (s) Is. 4. 3. 45. 22. Luk. 3. 6. (t) Ps. 98. 2, 3. (u) Ps. 98. 9. 96, 97. &c. (x) Is. 60. 21, 22 (y) Is. 40. 11. Ezek. 34. 12. &c. (z) Matth. 19. 28, 29. Rev. 11. 17, 18.

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and sufferings been repaired, nor of those who have loved and followed him : One has died as a Malefactor, another as a Seducer, a St. *Andrew* on the Cross, a St. *Lawrence* on the Grid-iron, and so many other holy Martyrs who have suffered Persecution and Death for Righteousness and Truth. There has been no reparation of all this hitherto, but by imaginary things, as they say, that Jesus Christ was exalted on the Cross, which is an infamous reparation, to dye on a Gibbet as a Malefactor. If those who hold this Cross to be a reparation of Honour, were hanged after this manner themselves, they would not believe that their Honour were repaired by this : How can they imagine that that of God was so : It is not to be imagin'd that Honour should be repaired by Infamy it self. But because his coming in Glory was unknown to them, they have applied Infamy to Glory, that they might say something of it. The truth is, Jesus Christ will come upon the Earth to (a) repair all things; for it would not be just that he should have suffered so innocently, and after him so many other Saints and Martyrs, who were free from Crimes, and that they should continue dead, without being repaired Spiritually and bodily for what they have suffered unjustly, or for the Love of God ; and if People imagine that all these things must be repair'd in a Divine and imaginary Heaven ; they are deceived, because this reparation cannot be perfectly made there ; for natural sufferings ought also to have suitable reparations, unless God did as Charmers do, who cure bodily wounds with spiritual remedies, or some artificial words. No, Sir, this will not go after that manner ; because God does his works always in a perfection, every way accomplish'd. (b) He will repair both bodily and spiritually all that has been done unjustly ; and the whole world shall thereby discover his Righteousness, Goodness and Truth, that every one may know that he is worthy, and just ; worthy of all honour ; which then all the world will render to him (c) ; and just, to render compleat Justice to every

(a) *Rev.* 20. (b) *Dent.* 32. 4. (c) *Is.* 45. 23, 24
one

one (d). There are so many innocent persons afflicted, and Saints unknown and despised; on the other hand there are so many wicked men honour'd, rais'd to places and Honours, and even held for Saints. All these being Dead, and the Truth, as to them, undiscover'd, must not God avenge the quarrel of the Good, and make appear the wickedness of the wicked, that he may be Just, Good, and True?

I said to her, *That every one look'd for these Reparations in the day of the general Judgment, which must be done in a little time, or suddenly, where every one shall be recompens'd in Heaven according to his Merits or Sufferings.*

She said, Sir, They will make God a God of Confusion: What appearance is there that this Judgment can pass in a day, or suddenly, since the whole world must appear there? It should be necessary that all the men in the world, should, after the manner of an Enchantment, be Transported to the same place in an instant; who could hear in that croud the Justification of the Righteous? If it were to be done only by word, they would not hear one, by reason of another; and if every one in particular must be spoke to, to declare his good or evil Deeds, it would need a long time before all were repair'd: Years would not suffice to Judge so many men as have been upon the Earth. Truly, Sir, all the speculations of men are nothing, in respect of the Truth, but Chimera's in the Air. God took six days (e) to Create the World deliberately and in order, as he has done all his works by weight (f) and measure, without any disorder or confusion. He made Noah prepare an hundred years before the (g) Deluge; and when it came, it began to Rain, which Rain lasted (h) forty days. The Plagues are now begun, and will follow in order even to their end, and the Judgment will also go on in order, so deliberately, that there shall not be the least confusion in it; for that can come only from men, and not from God, who does all in Order.

Neither is there any imaginary Heaven, as people fancy it, where every one shall be Rewarded or Restor-

(d) Rev. II. 18. (e) Gen. I. (f) Wisd. II. 21.
(g) Gen. 6. 3, 13, 14. (h) Gen. 7. 14.

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ed ; for Heaven is no other but the presence of God, who contains all things, and can't be contain'd by any, because he is greater than all things. We are in Heaven when (i) we are resign'd to him, whether we live or die, we are still in Heaven when we are in God : Now being thus Divinely in God, we do not, notwithstanding, receive the material and bodily reparation of the sufferings which we have materially and bodily endur'd : And as God has given us both a Body and Soul, he has also given us a Paradise both of Body and Soul: For this cause God would have become Man, even tho man had never sin'd ; for God makes all his works perfect and compleat : The Soul can indeed have its compleat Paradise by the Presence of God, because it is a Spirit like to him ; but the Body can have no Paradise but a Material and Bodily one like it self ; because it is of a Material Nature, it cannot have a perfect happiness by a Spirit, or Divinity. Lo, this is the reason why Man, that he may be happy, must of necessity have his Paradise in the world, which was Created by God for no other end (k) but to serve for a Paradise to Man, whom he was pleas'd to Create of a Bodily and Spiritual Nature, both together ; and he has also prepar'd for him, both a Bodily and Spiritual Blessedness, which are, the Presence of God as to the Spiritual ; and for the Corporeal, the Earth, and the World, and all that therein is : By which you may see, Sir, the truth of the coming of Jesus Christ upon Earth, to Reign with Men, that their eternal Blessedness may be compleated, and that every one may have a Reparation, by fulfilling all Righteousness ; not in a speculative or imaginary way, or of a short continuance ; but a Real, Divine and Corporeal Reparation, (l) which will last for ever : For God's Recompences are not Temporal and Finite, but Eternal, as coming from an Eternal God, who can't give finite or imperfect gifts. Consider, Sir, all these Truths, and you will perceive sensibly, why Christ must come to Reign upon Earth ; and that he has not taken an human Body to Reign in the Emphyreal Heaven which is

(i) *Psal.* 73. 25. (k) *Isa.* 45. 28. (l) *Isa.* 65. and 66. *Rev.* 13. 14.---17.

Divine, but only to Reign on Earth ; for this Divinity has no need of any Body ; but this body has need of, and must of necessity have some material place to contain it, such as the Earth is. And if to repair an injury done to any, it be needful to make the reparation in the same place, and before the same persons where the injury was done ; why should not God repair upon Earth the injuries received there ? On Earth they shall be (m) repaired, as on Earth they have been committed.

(m) *Psal.* 37. 9, 11.

The Eighth Conference.

Shews that M. Anthoinette Bourignon is sent from God to declare the Truth to Men.

I said to her, that I was now convinc'd of all ; that I must confess before all the world, that she possess the Holy Spirit ; for a humane Spirit could never give so clear an understanding of all the marvels of God.

*She Said, Sir, you are not deceived in believing that I possess the Holy Spirit, because he lives in me and teaches me all that I have told you ; for I have never learn'd any thing from any man, neither would I learn of them, because they are in darkness, and do not know the Truth in any thing. They believe they are very Learned, and they are nothing but (n) ignorants, being turn'd away from the Truth by so many Novelties which they have made them believe. They will needs maintain the *Roman Church* to be holy, and own her Councils as acted by the Holy Spirit, while neither the one nor the other is true. For the Church (o) is the *Babylon* of confusion, and the Councils are the means*

(n) *Rom.* 1. 22. (o) *Rev.* 17. 5.

by

by which the Devil has withdrawn Christians from the Law of God, they having Ordain'd so many outward things, that the inward may be forgotten; and that thro' so many Natural things, People may think no more of the Spiritual. Their Commands, their Sacraments, their Indulgences, are all diversions from Salvation, to obtain which there is nothing needful for all persons, even those who are without God's Grace, and straying from the way of Salvation, (p) but the observing the Commands of God, and the Doctrine of the Gospel; for God will never give any other Commands, and Jesus Christ will never give any other Counsels, than those he has given us by his Doctrine of the Gospel: He says, *That he is not (q) come for the Righteous, but for sinners.* This being so, all sinners, who desire to be converted, must take up this Gospel-Life, by which they shall certainly attain to Salvation, since Jesus Christ is the way to it: But the Devil to divert men, has introduc'd by these Councils so many diverse things, that this Doctrine is destroyed. To discover this Truth, Sir, you need but observe mens Behaviour: This will give you certain Evidences of it; for you will see that all trust on the Councils, the Sacraments, and the Ordinances of the Church; and no body observes the Counsels of the Gospel, which are so banish'd out of the minds of men now, that they reckon them foolishness.

I intreated her to tell me if she was sent from God to declare the Truth to men?

She said, Yes, Sir, I AM SENT FROM GOD TO BRING LIGHT TO THE WORLD, AND TO BEAR WITNESS OF THE TRUTH, as he does all his works in *Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth*, and never surprizes any Body. He has SENT me to tell, That the Last Times are come; That the World is judged, and the sentence is irrevocable; That the Plagues are begun, and will not cease till all evil be rooted out; and that Jesus Christ will come shortly on the Earth to finish this, and then he will continue to Reign with men of good will, who shall enjoy Eternal Peace.

(p) 1 Cor. 7. 19. (q) Math. 9. 13.

I AM SENT with a Commission to declare all these things to men, to the end that, peradventure, some of them may be Converted and Repent, that they may Reign with Jesus Christ in his Glory : But wickedness is come to so great an height, that the Truth can't be declar'd to Men, at least they will not any more receive it : They love nothing but (r) Flattery and lies, and reject the Truth, because it agrees not with their way of Living; for he who will continue in his Sins and Errors, will say, that we trouble him, by Declaring the Truth to him ; and he who will not amend, will say, that we raise scruples to him, by telling him the Truth, that re-proves him. Thus all the World perishes, without being desirous to be helped.

I AM CERTAINLY SENT FROM GOD, to declare the Truth of every thing : But no body will hear it but in so far as it is agreeable to them, and does not reprove them. Should I study Sir, to please Men or God ? A Messenger ought not to receive either Good or Ill, when he is but the Minister of good, or ill News, without having caus'd them. I have lov'd the *Roman Church*, for I was born and baptized under her ; and have punctually follow'd her Ordinances, and the decisions of her Councils when I knew them : But since God has made me see, that she is unfaithful to him, and has forsaken him to join herself to the Devil, ought I not to declare these truths to my Christian Brethren, who are ignorant of them, that they may not perish in their ignorance ? They would be much to blame to render me evil for good, and to persecute me for procuring their Salvation ; for I have no advantage by declaring these truths to them, except the obedience I owe to God, and the charity I have for their Souls ; for otherwise I should beware of speaking things that are so disagreeable to them.

I ask'd her, *What person on Earth could be so wicked, as to persecute her for declaring simply the truth that comes from God without any passion?*

She said, Sir, all good men will perceive abundant-

ly by my words that I am not mov'd by any vicious passions; but by a pure desire of declaring the truth; because I neither seek nor pretend to any thing from any body: The friendship and hatred of men is all one to me, there is nothing but the pleasing or displeasing of God that touches me. Notwithstanding the Devil having so great a number of his adherents who are in authority, he will excite them to rise up against me, because of the truth which discovers his wickedness. He has for a long time ruled in the Church under a colour of Holiness, by which means he has gain'd the most Pious to be his Followers without their perceiving it: But as soon as the Truth shall be shewn them, they will easily discover his deceits, and will abhor them. This will enrage him against me, and (s) he will pursue me with all his force. But I do not fear that he shall be able to touch me; for God is my defence. I will not fear all those Enemies, how Powerful soever they may be. The Lord whom I serve is above all things. I have never done Evil to any Body; but all sort of good to all, according to my Power. Nevertheless I shall not fail to be pursu'd and Persecuted by all those who are the Devil's adherents; because by my means his head (t) will be bruised, and he will gain none any longer but by force; for his falsehoods and deceits will be discovered and brought to Light for those who desire to see and know them: God indeed never forces any Body, but he sends his Light into the World, that every one that pleases may receive it. I AM CREATED FOR THIS, and cannot be silent, when it shall be time to speak I will speak, both in publick and private, when it shall please God, but still the truth, without straying from it. I doubt not but at first they will suspect me to be a *Heretick*, because the *Roman Church* condemns, as such, all those who do not yield to her sentiments; and for my part, I look on all those as *Hereticks*, who are contrary to the doctrine of the Gospel, among which those *Romanists* are the first: But this is a maxim which the Devil ordinarily observes, to lay the blame on others of all the evils which he does himself: By this means they will find the way to declare me a

(s) Rev. 12. 13, 17. (t) Gen. 3. 15. Confer. Rev. 12. 11. and 17.

Heretick, because they (u) have denied the Doctrine of Jesus Christ.

I said to her, *That the Roman Church would be a strong adversary, for she has great power and authority, and will yield to nothing that is not agreeable to her Doctrine.*

* *She said*, Sir, the power of that *Romish Church* shall be very shortly taken away by the Lord of Hosts who will (y) destroy her in such a manner that of all those magnificences there shall not be one stone left upon another. All her members shall be disjoynted, and dislocated, and without power. She must bear rule yet for a little time, and exercise her villanies outwardly, as she has done for this long time inwardly; her murders and imprisonments are at the door, to the end her evil may have its full accomplishment, both inward and outward. Till then God will let her go on, because his justice never inflicts a perfect punishment (z) till the evil be perfect and compleat in all respects; for evil always (a) begets punishment, according to the greatness of the evil the punishment is measured out. I have no apprehension of her power; because he who has given it, will take it from her. She will not do so much evil in killing bodies, as she does now in killing Souls; for it will be the happiness of those (b) who shall die for the real truth, if they receive it. For hitherto it has not been yet discover'd, nothing of the Holy Scripture has been explain'd in its perfect sense, every one has drawn conjectures from it according to his Light, not according to what is in it in effect; thus they might well die for holding some opinion which was not the real truth, but the opinion of some Author, for which they might die indeed without being for this the *Martyrs* of Jesus Christ. For to be such, a man must die for the Defence of the Law of God, and the Doctrine of the Gospel, or otherwise he cannot be a *Martyr* before God, however men call many others by this name; this shews that there is obscurity and darkness through all; even in the

(u) *Luk.* 18. 8. *Tit.* 1. 16. (x) *Mat.* 24. 2. *Rev.* 17. and 18. (y) *Rev.* 6. 10, 11. (13. 7.) (z) *Mat.* 23. 32, 33. *Rev.* 18. 5. (a) *Jer.* 2. 19. (b) *Rev.* 14. 13.

most holy things: Every one walks in the dark, not discerning the pure Truth: Even many who have the best Maxims, would judge indeed that I were an Heretick, in speaking against the Decrees of the Councils of Rome, out of a pious belief that they have been all held by the Co-operation of the Holy Spirit. Which is a false Supposition: For the Holy Spirit never changes. With what he inspir'd the Apostles, he inspires also at present those who hear him. They are always the same things.

I said to her, *That the Holy Spirit did sometimes inspire diverse Means for the attainment of the same End.*

She said, 'Tis true, Sir, if the Means which those Councils set before us did all aim at the keeping of the Commands of God, and at his Doctrine of the Gospel, I should believe that they came from the Holy Spirit; but when they aim at a quite contrary sense, I may well judge that they come not from thence; because God never contradicts himself: He has commanded, that we love him with all our Heart; and these Councils say, that to get the Pardon of our Sins, and obtain Salvation, it suffices that we have a sorrow for sin out of fear of Hell. Can these two contrary senses come from the same God? And there are so many other things which are variously oppos'd to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, (as I have told you formerly); as the baptizing little Infants; and a Thousand other things, which are directly contrary to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. I know indeed, that they deny this Truth, saying, that they have ordain'd nothing contrary to the Law of God. For with studied Words and Terms they cover all their Faults; and I am neither a Philosopher nor Divine to answer their artificial Arguments or studied Words; but I say in truth, that they do in effect directly contrary to the Law of God, and the Doctrine of the Gospel: Not that they say so; but they do it: And Deeds are more (c) than Words. I doubt not but they would surprize me by my Words: For the Devil has nothing but Subtilties wherewith to cover his Malice: But they cannot surprize me in the matter of the Essential Truth, which abides always true. They might say indeed, the Councils do not say that we ought not to love

(c) Tit. 1. 16.

God with all our Heart ; but only that Attrition is sufficient for Salvation : Is not that enough to teach indirectly that we are not obliged to love God ? And is not this indirect Doctrine much worse than the direct, which no good Men would follow ?

I asked, *If the Light which she received from the Holy Spirit was contrary to what the Councils had ordained ?*

She said, Yes, Sir, the Decrees which the Councils have made (so far as I know them) are all directly contrary to what the Holy Spirit dictates to me : And you your self may perceive it : Though there were nothing but the forbidding to read the Gospels and the holy Bible in the Vulgar Tongue, is not this contrary to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ ; who has given his Word rather to the vulgar and simple People, than to the Learned (d) ? And if it had not been his Will they should read it after his Death, he would not have left it them in Writing. This is the Nourishment of the Children of God (e) : And these Councils would make them die for hunger. Is not also the forbidding Priests to labour against the Commandment of God, who ordained Adam, (f) the most holy of all Men, to labour in penitence for his Sin ? And the Oath which they cause the Priests to take not to receive any other Explications of the Holy Scriptures but those approved by the Church, is it not also against the Holy Spirit, who (g) offers every Moment to give new Light, which these Councils do not approve, because it would reprove them : For all that comes from the Holy Spirit reprove Evil. There are also many other things which these Councils have ordained, that are contrary to the Light that God gives me, which is wholly conformable to the Law of God and the Doctrine of Jesus Christ : I have no need to read any Books to know if they be endorsed by the Holy Spirit, because the Sentiment of my Soul gives me still evidence enough of them. When I understand only the substance of a thing, I perceive certainly, whether it come from the Holy Spirit or not. You may easily see, Sir, by all that I have already told you, that this Church and her Councils

(d) 1 Cor. 1. 27, 28. (e) Mat. 4. 4. (f) Gen. 3. 19.
(g) Joel 2. 28, 29. John 16. 13. Phil. 3. 15. 1 Theff. 5. 19, 20.

are not guided by the Holy Spirit; but (b) by the Spirit of Error which deceives all the World under this false Masque of the Holy Church and Holy Councils, whereby the most Innocent let themselves be ruled by the Devil at his pleasure, while they believe that they follow the Truth, which is God.

The Ninth Conference,

*Speaks of the Sins which we commit in another ;
and that to declare the Truth of Evil, is
not Sin.*

I said to her, I was more certain that she was guided by the Holy Spirit, than that the Church and her Councils were so ; and therefore she must tell me what I ought to do.

She said : Sir, You may indeed lean to my Sayings, because I speak nothing of my self. It is true, it seem'd somewhat hard to you, that I overturn the Church and her Councils; and also when I say that the Devil rules them: But I know this by the Light of the Holy Spirit, which obliges me to declare it, perhaps for the enlightning of others, that they may be converted ; or to give them a full Measure, that no body may pretend Ignorance: For if I were not prest in my Conscience, I would beware to speak of such Evils, as one trembles to hear them. It were more pleasant and agreeable if I could say in truth, that the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit, and that Rome is the Church of God. This Discourse would comfort my Soul, and give content to all those who are under her Obedience. But this not being true, I should flatter them to their destruction : Whereas the true knowledge of Things may save them. You have been also troubled sometimes to hear me say that all men now are

(b) Isa. 29. 9, 10.

in a state of Damnation, which notwithstanding is most true; and if I could say in truth the contrary, I would be lov'd and follow'd by all those who believe they are in a state of Grace: But because I can't speak a Lie, every one leaves me that they may flatter themselves with fine Hopes; Truth seeming to them more hard than Damnation; though the one be much more lovely than the other; Because Truth enlightens alwayes the Understanding; though it be somerimes hard to Sense, yet it can lead us to Salvation, and make us happy to all Eternity; whereas Damnation renders us for ever miserable. 'Tis a trouble to us to be told that we are out of the way of Salvation, and we ought rather to be grieved for being ignorant of the truth in those Things which concern our Eternal Happiness: (i) The ignorance of this occasions our Damnation. Therefore, Sir, never be troubled any more to hear me tell the Truth in evil Things; for it is much more useful than to have it declared in good Things. For if I should say to you, that you are in a state of Salvation, your Soul should receive no advantage thereby: On the contrary, it might be tainted thereby with Vain-glory, or contract a sloth in that which is good: And if I should say to you, that the *Roman Church* is Holy, and guided by the Holy Spirit, it would be of no advantage to you, since you obey her as much already as if she were really Holy: You could not gain any thing by my saying so. So that to know the Truth of Good is much less profitable than to know the Truth of Evil, from which one cannot preserve himself without knowing it. This the Devil knowing, he has found the way to introduce into the Church a Maxim, That we ought never to speak evil of any, though it were true. They call this the *Sin of Detraction*; that her Evil may be still concealed, and none may dare to discover it for fear of committing a sin. It were good we knew in what place the Holy Spirit has declared, That to tell the Truth of Evil is a sin: For if this were true, Jesus Christ would have committed many sins, when he publickly called the Priests and Pharisees, (k) *Hypocrites, Generation of Vipers*, and so many other Names, discovering their Wickedness and Falshood, saying, *That they were whited Sepulchers*,

(i) *Isa.* 4. 13. (k) *Mat.* 12. 34. *Chap.* 23.

fair without, but within full of dead mens bones; and that they made clean the out side, leaving the in-side full of uncleanness. Could all these Truths discovered by Jesus Christ, be sins of Detraction? as they have perswaded all those which declare such Truths; since all that Jesus Christ did while he was upon Earth, was to give us an Example? Is it not evident enough, Sir, that the calling that sin, to declare the Truth of another mans Evil, has been invented by the Devil, to cover his filthiness, and that all sort of sins and Evils might be cherished by the privacy of them? For the most part of good men endeavour to excuse and cover them, believing they do well in it, though notwithstanding it be a very ill thing, because it is hurtful Three several ways: *First*, to him that does evil, who will not amend so easily while his evil is conceal'd as if it were discovered: *Secondly*, It is very prejudicial to him to whom the evil is done; because it is very hard to avoid or guard against an unknown Evil: And *Thirdly*, To the Person who conceals anothers Evil, who co-operates to the Evil of him that does it, and of him that receives it; and nevertheless, they call that great Good of declaring the Truth of Evil, the *Sin of Detraction*. This unhappy Silence makes all sort of Abominations daily to encrease in the sight of God; because they having lost his Fear, they lose also that of Men; since their sins cannot be discovered without offending God. This is also a Doctrine which the Devil hath invented, with so many others, to the end that every one may follow Antichrist, while they think they are doing well: For if it were a sin to declare the Truth of Evil, Jesus Christ would not have done it of his Apostles themselves, calling (1) *St. Peter* publicly *Satan*, and reprovng him in all his Faults; as the Apostles (m) afterwards did their Disciples: But these new Masters teach, That it is a sin to declare the Truth of Evil, without any other ground but that of covering their Wickedness, that their Evils may not be discovered, and they may commit them the more, by continuing in the Reputation of being good Men, though they be wicked. If they had considered well the Nine ways by which we

(1) *Mat. 16. 23.* (m) *St. Paul to the Corinth. and Galat.*

may sin in another, they would find, that 'tis a sin to conceal the Truth of Evil ; whereas they teach, that 'tis one to discover it.

I entreated she would explain to me the meaning of these sins which we commit in another ; and if we are guilty of them, that I might guard against them.

She said : Sir, We are as guilty (n) of the sins we commit in another, as of those which we our selves commit : for God regards not so much the Action (o) as the Intention. Sins being Spiritual Things, have no need of Material Acts. God * *searches the Heart and the Reins*, and not so much the Feet, or the Hands. These inward Sins are so much the more dangerous than the outward, because we take less heed of them ; for they are not so manifest and known, (p) though notwithstanding they be mortal and damnable sins. Every one excuses himself of them before Men : Which he cannot do before God ; for Ignorance never excuses sin : If we are very careful and diligent to know and discover what is necessary and profitable for our Body, we are obliged to be much more so as to our Soul. 'Tis not enough that one says he knows not these sins, because every one is obliged to know them ; and our Salvation or Damnation depends upon them : For he who sins ignorantly, goes ignorantly to Hell. We are created for no other end but for Salvation : This is the only Affair of Importance that concerns us most nearly ; for setting aside Salvation, all is perishing. For this cause we must study to discover what Sin is.

Therefore to satisfy your Demand, I will explain the Nine Ways by which we offend God in another.

First, We commit sin in *counselling to do evil*. How many are there who are guilty of this sin without perceiving it ? If you have a Friend affronted, you will say to him, *I would not suffer this Affront without revenging myself* : Or you will tell him, *You would not have the Heart to suffer it* ; and such like things : Or if we give any Counsel that is not according to the Righteousness, Goodness, or Truth of God ; or if we counsel any to do evil for our pleasure, or profit, or otherwise. These Counsels are as

(n) *Rom.* 1. 32. *1 Tim.* 5. 22. (o) *Mat.* 5. 28. *John* 8. 44. * *Jer.* 17. 20. (p) *Psal.* 19. (18) 13.

many Sins as the wicked Actions which those commit whom we have counsel'd to do them, whether they be in Word or Deed; because our Advice is often the cause why the Sin is done: By a just Title then, we ought to bear the punishment of it; as we shall certainly do before God, who looks more to the Wickedness of the Heart than to the evil Actions: And he who counsels another to do evil, is sometimes more wicked than he who does it out of complaisance to his Counsellour, or out of the esteem he has for him. Those in Offices, or Attorneys and Advocates who give Counsel, and not according to straight Justice and Truth, do often fall into these Sins, and therefore they ought to be condemn'd of the same guilt with him who commits the evil Deeds to which they have advis'd him; for they have both equally contributed thereunto, and the Counsellour often with more Wickedness than the Doer, because to counsel Evil is worse than to do it.

Secondly, He who *supports Evil* commits also the same sin with him who does it, because if Evil were not supported, it would not be so often committed: Therefore, the Supporter of Evil causes the evil Deed, and gives the Man boldness to commit it the more; and therefore he who supports it, ought justly to bear the punishment of him who does it, yea, even more; for it would be in his power to hinder it, by not supporting it. Those are doubly guilty, that is, of the support that they themselves give, and of the Evil done by the other, which he would not do, if he were not supported in it.

The *Third Way* by which we commit sin in another, is, In *commanding to do Evil*. In which Fathers and Mothers, Masters and Mistresses, and other Superiours, do very often fall; who command those under them, to do something that is not just or good. These are guilty of as many sins as they command their Subjects or Inferiours, who very often, if they were left to themselves, would not, or durst not, commit the Evils which are commanded them: Though Inferiours are not oblig'd, and never ought, to obey the Commands which are given them to do evil, yet the Commanders cease not to offend mortally

only by commanding it; as an Inferiour commits a mortal sin in doing the Evil which has been commanded him, because the sins of the one cannot lessen the sins of the other, but both are guilty of the same commanded sins. In which many are deceived, who believe that 'tis lawful for them to do the Evils which have been enjoined them by Father, Mother, Masters or Mistresses, or any other Superiours, whosoever they be; as also such Superiours deceive themselves, who are perswaded that they have not committed sins, when they act not in the evil Deeds; for truly, and in the sight of God, they commit as many as they have commanded to be done; for if their Wills were not evil, they would never advise to do evil, much less command it.

The *Fourth* way by which we offend God by another, is, When we *commend or approve Evil*. This is very common in this Age, wherein evil Doers are commended. When we see any one avenge himself of an Affront, we will say, He shews that he has Courage; we are ready even to praise Children that are malicious in defending themselves, as well as others who give blow for blow; or those (r) who signalize themselves by Pomp and Vanity; or we praise those who exceed in Feasting, or other Evils, whatever they be. Now the Praise of Evil incites Men to do it the more, and encourages them to commit it the more boldly. And therefore he who praises it, is guilty of as many sins as he who does the Evil.

The *Fifth* Way by which we offend God in another, is, In *partaking of the Evil*; as, when one has some Advantage by the Evil done by another; or, if any one profit by the Theft which another commits, whether by buying what is stolen, or eating and drinking it, or by enjoying some ill-gotten Goods: So also he who makes gain by the Gluttony or Drunkenness, or other sins which other Men commit. By all these Things Men are partakers of other Mens sins, and thereby do the same Evil with him who directly commits it, yea, even more; because he who commits Theft, or any other actual Wickedness, runs the hazard of his Life, or of other corporal Punishments; but he who partakes in it only, lives without fear

(r) *Psalm* 49. (48) 18.

though he be equally guilty with him who commits it, nevertheless he does not undergo the same Penance in this World; neither does he acknowledge his Faults, that he may give satisfaction for it in the other: Therefore his sin is so much the more dangerous, because he does not weigh it as it is weigh'd before God.

The *Sixth* Way that we offend God in another, is, When we take pleasure in another Mans sins; as he who takes pleasure to see Men fight a Duel, or otherwise; or is pleased that another cheats cunningly, or steals handsomely, or provides for his Accommodations with Luxury and Vanity. Thus, whatever the Evil be, the pleasure that we take in seeing another do Evil, is sin: For he who loves God, ought to be grieved (*s*) for all kind of Evil that he sees committed by others, as well as for what he commits himself.

The *Seventh* Way, is, When we do not correct Evil, as much as is in our power; as, Fathers, Mothers, Masters, Mistresses, who tolerate the Evil of their Children or Inferiours, because they desire not to offend them, or for some other humane Respect, or even out of softness of Temper, or natural Goodness, suffering Evil rather than they will correct it, when they are oblig'd to do it. All these are guilty of the same Evils with their Children or Inferiours; for their tolerating them is the cause that they are habituated and continue in Evil, who might have amended if they had been rebuked and chastised for it. Thus, many will be damn'd who are not apprehensive of it: For all the Evils which Subjects or Inferiours commit for want of reproof, will be laid to the charge of Superiours, as if they themselves had committed them by their own Deed (*t*), because of the Obligation that lyes on them to correct Evil, and their neglecting to do it upon whatsoever pretext.

The *Eighth* Way that we offend God in another, is, When we do not hinder Evil when we may do it; as, if Two Persons quarrel or fight, and we might pacifie or divert them, nevertheless we will not give our selves the trouble, either through sloth, or humane respect, or some other cause; or when we see one ready to do evil, and we might

(*s*) Jer. 9. 1. 2 Cor. 12. 21. (*t*) Ezek 33. 6, 7, 8.

hinder

hinder it by admonishing him, or discovering his Evil by crying out, or otherwise; which we omitting, we commit the same Evil with him who does it, when it is in our power to hinder it by what way soever this might be, as by giving too much liberty to those under our Charge, or leaving them in dangerous occasions, or giving them Money, or other things, with which they take occasion to offend God. In all these, and divers other Cases, we are guilty of the sins which others commit, by not hindring them, when we might have done it.

The Ninth and Last is, *That we do not tell the Evils that we know of others to those who might put a stop to them*; as, in not telling the Faults of Children, Scholars or Servants, to Fathers, Superiours or Masters, who might prevent them. Silence, in this respect, does as much Evil as the Faults which are committed without the knowledge of the Superiours, because if they were known to them, they might hinder or correct them; which they not doing, being ignorant of them, the fault and blame falls upon those who conceal them, whether to please the Evil doers, or upon any other pretext whatsoever, because by their silence in some manner they co-operate to the sin. Nevertheless, there are very few who are apprehensive of these kinds of sins, and much less do they repent of them; for they imagine, they are not guilty of them, because they have not committed them effectively in their own Persons; yet they will be all imputed to them as well as if they had personally committed them; and they cannot be excused through ignorance, because all Christians are obliged to know what they ought to do or avoid; for Jesus Christ and his Apostles have set down all for him who will take the pains to search for it. But the darkness is so great, that they perceive not the things that are necessary; and they live in such a negligence of their Salvation as if they were assur'd of it, though they be very far from it; because *no (x) unclean thing shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. Those who enter there must be holy. None can otherwise (y) draw near to God, the Source of all Purity and Holiness. In which many are deceiv'd who believe that Holiness belongs only to the Perfect, whom

(x) Rev. 21. 27. (y) Heb. 12. 14.

they imagine to be some singular Persons: And yet without Holiness no Man shall ever be saved.

I said to her, *That very few Persons consider'd these things, and scarce any look on themselves as guilty of those sins which they commit in another, no more than of those which they commit against the Holy Ghost, because they perceive not that they are guilty of them; though notwithstanding I see clearly, that those who are esteemed holy or perfect are tainted both with the one and the other of the said sins.*

She said: Sir, I am well pleased that you begin to discover that by which the World is condemn'd, that you may not need to believe it blindly; for if you perceive clearly that the Holy and the Perfect now are polluted with the sins which they commit in another, and with those against the Holy Ghost, those whom they call Wicked are visibly defiled with divers kinds of Actual Sins: Which is known to all the World, Of whose Salvation then can you hope for? The Wicked bring their Condemnation upon them through their obstinacy in a wicked Life; and the Good draw it on by the sins which they commit in another, and those against the Holy Ghost, which they will not know, and much less amend, because they presume upon the certainty of their Salvation without all these Circumspctions whereby they might discover the state of their Souls, or the Sins with which they may be defiled, which are Spiritual, and of which through blindness they are insensible. Hereby the Proof is just of the World's being universally judged, because the sins are universal; which sins (z) do judge and condemn Souls. For God judges no Body: He only fulfils all Righteousness; and those who shall be condemned, shall be so always by their own sins, and never otherwise. And if Sins condemn, then all they who live in them do bear their Condemnation: And since we see that in this Age neither the Good nor the Wicked are free from sins, we cannot but see and confess, that the whole World is judg'd and condemn'd, and that we are arriv'd at the general Judgment, seeing generally sin rules and bears sway. We must not look for any other condemnation but that of our own sins known to Gods Justice, which condemns always all that's unjust, without hatred

(z) Jer. 2. 19.

and without favour. The Righteous Ballance of this Divine Justice being still kept steady by a Hand that never shakes, does always condemn Unrighteousness.

I said to her, *That I was wholly convinc'd by so clear and true Arguments: That I acknowledg'd, without doubt, the World was generally judg'd by its general Sins; asking her, if while this Sentence was putting in execution, there were not means whereby a Man might be converted.*

She said: Yes, Sir, there are means of Conversion as long as we have life. There is place for Repentance till Jesus Christ shall come upon the Earth, and root out all Evil; yea, even when he shall come (a) there will be yet hopes of Pardon: Therefore he says, (b) That Sinners and Harlots shall inherit the Kingdom, and the Children thereof shall be cast out; because these wicked Persons may be yet converted, and acknowledge their sins; whereas those Children of the Kingdom, who esteem themselves holy and religious, continuing obstinate in the presumption of their Salvation, will be cast out, though they be called the Children of God and of his Kingdom. There are therefore means of Conversion for those who will repent and change their manner of Life, even though they were the greatest Sinners of the World; yea, even for those who are full of the sins against the Holy Ghost, or of the sins committed in another, provided they get out of their darkness, and receive the Truth. For these ends (c) God puts his last Sentence in execution slowly, and sends his Plagues one after another, that he may give time and leisure to all those who desire to be converted, to do penitence: In which he still exercises the Effects of his Almighty Goodness and Mercy, (d) not willing that a sinner should perish, but that he live and be converted. The sins against the Holy Ghost will be forgiven as well as other sins, provided they repent of them; which they not doing, they shall no more be pardoned when Jesus Christ shall come upon the Earth, than at present: For where there is no Repentance, there can be no pardon; for this cause the sins against the Holy Ghost will be very rarely

(a) *Revel.* 1. 7. (b) *Matth.* 8. 11, 12. & 21. 31, 32.
(c) *Wisd.* 12. 2. & 10. (d) *2 Pet.* 3. 9.

pardoned, because they are very seldom repented of and amended.

The Tenth Conference,

Shews what Souls shall be happy ; and explains the Eight Beatitudes.

I asked her, *By what means we might know or discover those who are truly converted to God.*

She said : Sir, Take the *Eight Beatitudes* which Jesus Christ (e) has declared, and see if those who say they are converted do possess them : For these only shall be blessed, and no others. Many say by word that they would be converted, and be wholly for God ; and notwithstanding there are no appearances of it. These are nothing but *wouldings* without effect, with which we deceive the World and our selves, and think to deceive God ; which cannot be, for he is too penetrating, and is not amus'd with Words ; therefore he has told us the Marks that one must have of true Conversion, and of a Right to Blessedness, by which real Converts may be discern'd from Hypocrites.

First, He calls *those blessed who are poor in Spirit* ; to shew, that all they whose Heart or Will is yet bent to the desire of having Wealth and Temporal Riches, are not converted nor blessed ; because he who yet desires Earthly Goods, is not converted to Eternal Goods ; for these Two Affections cannot dwell together (f) : However we say we are converted to God, we lie, so long as we are not poor in Desires, and that we still covet Earthly Things.

Secondly, Jesus Christ calls *those blessed who are meek* ; to shew, that they who are converted to God do always partake of his Goodness, and do good to all as they are able.

(e) Mat. 5. 3-10.

we hear People often say, that they are wholly devoted to God, while on occasions we see them chagrin, angry, froward, at variance with their Neighbours, quarrelling instead of bearing with them, or doing them no good but by constraint. Such are not converted, no more than they who in this World seek their Pleasure and Contentment, because Jesus Christ says, *Blessed are they that mourn*; and when we see that they will not endure or suffer any thing, but seek their Ease, Honour and Contentment, that they may live in as much Mirth as they can, these are not converted, and do not willingly mourn under persecution.

Fourthly, We know those that are converted to God, when they hunger and thirst after Righteousness: that is, thirst earnestly to become righteous, and seek the means and occasions to attain to this Righteousness. These are not converted who content themselves with their own Righteousness and Vertue, without aspiring to Gods Righteousness, or thirsting after true Vertue; but are more careful for Earthly Things, than for those which are Eternal.

The *Fifth* Mark that Jesus Christ has given whereby to know those who are converted, and shall be blessed, is *Mercy*. As long as we see Mens Hearts hardened, without Chariry for their Neighbour, minding only their own Interest, and not caring for the Troubles and Necessities of their Neighbour, these are not converted; because they have no Mercy, which is a Mark of True Conversion.

The *Sixth* Mark is *purity of Heart*. He who delights in dishonest Thoughts or Actions, cannot be converted; nor he who is subtil, and not sincere in his dealings, but deceitful and over-reaching, bearing envy or ill-will to another. None of these are of a pure and clean Heart, and so are not converted to God nor blessed; for a pure Heart is still upright, simple and chaste: By which we may discover if it be converted to God. As also if a Man be a *Peace-maker*, and of a *peaceable* Disposition within himself, and toward his Neighbour; this is a Mark of Conversion to God: For he who should say he were converted, and nevertheless should live in trouble and disquiet within himself, or in Debates and Quarrels with his Neighbours, he would be a Liar; for conversion

to God brings along with it Peace, and Tranquillity, and Repose : This the Children of God experience, who alone can be called blessed and converted, they having the Marks that Jesus Christ has given whereby to know them from the Children of the Devil. That none may falsely perswade himself that he is converted, he declares all the Conditions necessary for this Conversion, that is, the Eight Beatitudes; the Eighth of which is, *to suffer Persecution for Righteousness sake*. Many believe they are happy when they are without sufferings; nevertheless, this is a sign that they are not faithful to God; for he who faithfully serves him, will certainly suffer, because the Devil and wicked Men will persecute him for Righteousness, and true Vertue; which is still reprehended by them. By this Touchstone true Converts may be known: For he who does not willingly suffer Persecution for Well-doing, desires not to imitate Jesus Christ, who is the true Pattern of all the Works which lead to Bliss; and none can be happy or say'd but they who follow his Steps.

And we falsely perswade our selves of being converted to God if we possess not the Eight Beatitudes which Christ has publickly taught us: And as few as we see possess them, there are as few converted unto him. 'Tis all amusement to believe that any will be saved without the possession of these Eight Beatitudes, which Jesus Christ has given as Marks whereby to know his true Children from those who say they are, and are not.

And that you may not be deceived, Sir, I have explain'd them all to you, one by one, that you may know what manner of Persons these ought to be who in these last Times, and during the Plagues, desire to be converted to God, wherein many if they will may be converted: And that their Conversion may be true, they must still examine if they have these Eight Beatitudes, and they may be perswaded that as long as they have them not, they are not entirely converted; for Jesus Christ has said nothing in vain, and he has nam'd in particular all the Qualities the Blessed ordinarily have, without which they cannot be so. These are not the Speculations or Words of Men, but the Warnings of Jesus Christ himself, who cannot lie. Men would indeed glosse and dispute to amuse the World, but they can never change the Truth.

I said

I said to her, *That the Behaviour of Men being well considered, it seem'd there were none now in the Grace of God, or in the Blessed Estate that Jesus Christ had marked out, but rather that all did abound in sin.*

She said: Sir, It seem'd strange to you formerly, when I told you such things, because you had not examin'd it narrowly enough, and the darkness is so great, that the truth is not any longer discerned. The Devil has so blinded Mens Minds, and distracted their Understandings, that they look to nothing now but the Appearance of Things, and not the reallity of them. Every one believes he shall be happy, though he have not so much as one of the Eight Beatitudes. Either all the World must be deceived, or Jesus Christ has not pointed out aright the signs of those who are in a state of Salvation: For these Eight Beatitudes are not pronounced for those who are in Heaven; because all those who are with God, possess all the Beatitudes in perfection; and also there is no more persecution, nor Hunger or Thirst to be endured there; for there they are in perfect peace, and fully satisfied; neither is there any thing to be bewailed there, being in perfect joy; neither can they have poverty of Spirit, since they possess all things; there also there is no more occasion of shewing Mercy to their Neighbour, for none has need of any thing, the least of the Blessed possess more than the worth of Ten Thousand Worlds: By which it appears, that Jesus Christ speaks only of those who are upon Earth, who are obliged to have these Beatitudes if they would be saved, and come to the possession of the Promises made to each of the said Beatitudes, which are the certain Marks whereby to discover if we live in a state of Salvation or not. Nevertheless, no body examines himself upon this Head, to see if he have thole Beatitudes, no more than if they were not proclaimed for us. We say them as a Litany, and not as things that we are oblig'd to put in practice. In which we deceive our selves; for no body will attain to the state of Blessedness, but he who in this World shall put these Eight Beatitudes in practice: And as far as Men are estranged from them, they are as far from their Salvation.

I asked her, What Remedy there was for such general Evils in which no body could be saved?

She

She said: Sir, I told you long ago that Paradise was shut, My meaning was, that no Body now at Death attains to Bliss; because in their Life-time they make no Preparation for it, but they are every way estranged from God: For it is not now known what is Sin, nor yet what is Vertue: They imagine they are Vertuous when they do something that's good in appearance, and that they are not guilty of sin when they do not commit wicked Actions. This is the most crafty delusion of the Devil; by which he certainly gains all the good through this blindness of Mind. This is an universal Evil, which makes me afraid that not one Person shall be saved; because none do perceive their Evil but grosse Sinners who live in Actual sins: As for others, every Moment they take the Name of God in vain: One will say, *I trust in God*; another, *God will help us*; another, *God will shew us Mercy*; and thus on a Thousand other occasions the Name of God is still in their Mouth, calling on him to co-operate in their sins; For when they say they trust in God while the Soul wallows in sin, is to desire that God would do Injustice: Wherefore they may wait long in this sort of confidence, and shall never obtain their Desire: For God cannot help those who go on in sin, without being unjust; which he will never be. And he who says that God will help him, while he lives as People do at present, says that God will help him to sin; which he cannot do: For he cannot contribute directly or indirectly to any Sin; and if he assisted us in the way we live, he should contribute to many sins (g) which we commit: For if he assisted us to preserve our Temporal Goods, we would continue, yea, encrease our Pride, our Excesses and Vanities; and if he delivered us from Wars, Peace would give us occasions to forget God, and to abandon our selves the more to bodily Pleasures and Sensualities; and if he delivered us from our Miseries, of whatsoever kind, we would certainly be led to greater Evils: For Ease and Sloth engender all sort of Sins. And when we say, *God will have Mercy on us*, and nevertheless we go on in a state of sin, this is to blaspheme against the Righteousness of God: Because he can never have Mercy but (b) upon penitent Sinners: Which the Godly

(g) *Isa.* 20. 10. (b) *Exod.* 20. 6. *Ezek.* 33. 12.

now a days are very far from ; for they encourage themselves in their Sins as if they were Vertues, and even call them by the Name of Vertues : For the Avarice of the Cloisters and of the Religious is call'd *Charity* done them ; and the Adorning of Altars, building of Houses and Magnificent Churches is call'd the *Honour of God*, though these be but Vanities and Superfluities by which God is greatly offended. For if at Baptism we have renounc'd the World and its Pomps to become Christians, how can we adorn Churches, which we call the Temples of God, with the same Pomps and Vanities, which Christians are not permitted to seek after in their own Persons, nor in what belongs to them ? How can it be allowed to use them in Places particularly dedicated to God, without tacitely Insinuating that God is served with our sins and Impurities, as are all (i) sort of Pomps and Vanities, which are so common in Churches as well as in other places ? Nevertheless all this is covered with an Appearance of Vertue and Holiness. This renders all the World impenitent : For every one amuses himself with the belief of being sav'd in a state of Sin and Damnation ; Which is truly a desperate state ; because he who believes he is good, will never repent, and much less will he do Penitence, and consequently he shall never obtain Pardon : For God cannot pardon (k) without Repentance. All the Remedy that I see in this, is a perfect Conversion unto God, and a New Birth, as if till now we had never been in the World : For all that we have done hitherto has been evil and blame-worthy in the sight of God, though to us all seem to be good, through the Blindness of our Spirits, in which we have been so sunk, that no Body has seen whither he was going, more than we do in a very dark Night. Therefore Jesus Christ has said, That a man (l) must be born again, and become as a little Child, else he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. He speaks to those of the present Age : For if one do not re-enter into the Womb of the Rising Church, he cannot be sav'd.

(i) *Mal.* 2. 3. (k) *Luke* 13. 3. (l) *Mat.* 18. 3.

The Eleventh Conference,

Shews, how a Man must be born again to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: And that he must return to a Dependance upon God, which is the only thing that he essentially requires of Man.

I asked her, *How this New Birth could be in those who are already advanc'd in Years and Learning?*

She said: Sir, We must take up a Life wholly new, as if to day we were newly born: Because all the good that we think we have done heretofore is all evil, or at least good for this Life only: For all our good Works have still been attended with Self-love, or Humane Respects, (m) which can never be recompenc'd in Eternity, because we have here had their Reward. What we do out of Self-love is recompenc'd by our Satisfaction; and what we do out of Humane respects is recompenc'd by the complacency of Men: So that we can never in Justice pretend to any other thing; for we are fully satisfied in this World, according to the Pretensions or Ends we had in doing our good Works. Though they have been covered with a pretence of the Glory of God, or Charity to our Neighbours, yet in effect all this has been but Vanity. Therefore he who desires to be converted, must take up (n) a Life wholly new, and believe assuredly that he has never done so much as one Action purely for the Love of God. Which we may abundantly perceive by considering all the Sins against the Holy Ghost, and those which we commit by another, with the Eight Beatitudes, and the other solid Verrues. Every one may see thereby how far he is from the State of the Blessed that Jesus Christ has marked out in the Eight Beatitudes; and if he desire to recover them, what need he has to take up a Life wholly new, and to become as a new-born Infant, who lets him-

(m) *Mat. 6. 2, 3.* (n) *Rom. 6. 4.*

self be govern'd by his Heavenly Father. Neither Years nor Learning can hinder the resigning of our selves to God, that he may rule us as it shall please him : For the more we are advanc'd in Years, the more haste we ought to make to attain to Salvation, because we have no more Time but the small part of our Life that remains. The Conversion of those come to Years ought not to be delay'd one Day, because their Life may be gone, and then there is no Recovery ; for after Death (o) there is no Remission. The Learned ought also to consider, that all their Learning is nothing but Ignorance in the sight of God, which becomes often a hindrance to his Grace ; and that the Time is come, (p) *that he will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and abolish the prudence of the prudent, that all may (q) receive the Kingdom of Heaven as little Children.*

I said to her, *It was very desirable to be of the number of those true Converts, and that I would be the first who would resign all to God as a little Infant.*

She said: Sir, No body can be entirely converted if he do not know what is Sin, and also true Vertue. These Two Things are necessary : For otherwise one will think, he is converted while he is yet full of Sins, and has not acquir'd any solid Vertues. Therefore I have spoken so particularly to you, that you may not abide in the darkness which surrounds all the Men of the World. There may be yet many who desire to be converted : But few of these know their inward Sins, and yet fewer know what is true Vertue. All these would make false Conversions in the sight of God : For if one does not know his hidden Sins, he cannot amend them ; and if he know not what true Vertue is, he cannot put it in practice. The ignorance of these Two Things hinder a Man from being converted to God, or yielding himself to be governed by him. This is therefore what he ought first of all to learn, to know the state of his own Soul, in what degree of sin it is, and also in what degree of true Vertue. If these things were known, there be many who would embrace the Spirit of Penitence, and resign themselves to God as little Children : But because they know not the

(o) *Heb. 9. 27.* (p) *I Cor. 1. 19.* (q) *Mark 10. 15.*
state

state of their own Conscience, many do insensibly perish (r) not knowing their Misery. If you desire, Sir, to be resign'd to God as a Child, think that all you have done hitherto is worth nothing; and cast (s) your self into the Arms of God, who is your Father, as a Child who cannot speak, that he may teach you all things. He will certainly do it: For he desires (t) our Conversion. When we withdraw from him by our Sins, he suffers it, because he will not take back the Free-will that he has once given us: For he is unchangeable (u) in all his Works: But as soon as we return to him by Penitence, he receives us as the Father did his Prodigal Son, owns us for (x) his Children, and the Heirs of his Glory. But if you resolve to adhere to your own Wisdom, you will never receive the Holy Spirit. You must become simple as a Child, and not use your own Will any longer, resigning and committing it wholly into the Hands of God, giving him the Reins of your Will, that he may guide and direct it as it shall please him; and that you may no longer abuse it, as you have done hitherto: Which you must acknowledge with Regret: For if our Will had been govern'd by God, we had never fallen into such Extremities of all Evils.

I said to her, *I must acknowledge my Will had not been govern'd by God, because I knew not as I do now the way how to resign my self to God.*

She said: Sir, No body can be saved who knows not that he must be entirely resigned to God: For this is the first and last Commandment that he has given to Man: And to say better; It is the only thing that God requires of Man. If we would absolutely depend upon God, we should fulfil all the Law and the Prophets. This is the one thing needful. All that ever I can say, Sir, is comprehended in THE DEPENDANCE that we ought to have upon God; for he has never demanded any other thing of Man (nor will he so long as the World shall last) but this Dependance, that he owes to God. It is a very small Matter that he asks of us. 'Tis a great Ingratitude also (y) for us to deny this Dependance upon him; since he is the Lord and Creatour of all Things, has created us of

(r) Isa. 5. 13. (s) Psal. 37. 5. (t) Ezek. 18. 23. (u) Rom. 11. 29. (x) Luke 15. 24. (y) Deut. 32. 6.

Nothing, and gives us all that we have to enjoy in full Liberty, provided only we still acknowledge our Dependance upon him in all Things. This Great God could he demand less of a silly Worm of the Earth, than the Acknowledgment of Dependance upon its God? This is so just a Thing, that though God had never declared to Man that he desir'd this of him, he was oblig'd always to acknowledge it; since all came truly from him; and he had bestow'd on him so many Favours and Prerogatives, which should oblige him to a continual Gratitude, even though he had never had any thing beyond Natural Reason: For it is said, that even Brute and Cruel Beasts have been sensible of a Benefit received from Men all the Days of their Life; and Man endued with so accomplish'd an Understanding will not acknowledge the Dependance he has upon God, nor yield up his Will to his, even though he be so good (*z*) as to desire it! For if God were not an Excess of Goodness, he would rather disdain Men of so little Worth, than permit them to unite their Will to his. Nevertheless, he permits and desires it, yea, rejects and threatens those who will not do it; as Jesus Christ threatened St. Peter (*a*), when he would not be washed by him. If we had but a little of Judgment, we would entreat God, to permit not only that our Will may be united to his; but rather, that ours may be wholly annihilated, and that he may exercise his own over us only and absolutely.

I asked her, *What she meant by saying*, That the Acknowledgment of our Dependance upon God, was the only Commandment, *since God had given us so many others?*

She said: Sir, There is no Essential Commandment but this. All the rest are Accidental. For when God created Adam, and in him all Men, he gave him Power over all Sublunary Things (*b*), having made all the Beasts subject to him, that he might rule over all as a Little God, without any Reservation, except that he should always acknowledge the Dependance that he had upon his Creator: Which being done by him, he might rule over all Things as a dependent Deity. And for a Token of this Dependance, he forbade him to eat of the Fruit of one Tree only, per-

(*z*) *Prov.* 23. 26. (*a*) *John* 3. 8. (*b*) *Psal.* 8. 7.

mitting him to eat of all the rest. The meaning of which was, that Man might enjoy, use, and rule over all Things, provided always he acknowledg'd his Dependence on the Supream Deity, of whom he held all Things. And if *Adam* had not forgotten himself by quitting this Dependence and desiring to depend upon himself, he should never have received any other Command from God, nor yet any Man after him. But the Righteousness of God oblig'd him to lay other Commands on Man for the Penance of his Disobedience. He enjoyn'd him (c) *to till the Ground, and to gain his Bread with the sweat of his Face*, which was the Second Command that God gave to Man, which nevertheless was only Accidental through the Fall of *Adam*, and not Essential by the Will of God, who lov'd rather to see him free, without being subjected to any other Thing but Himself alone. And his giving the Commands to *Moses* for the Children of *Israel* was also Accidental: For if they had not fallen into so many different Sins, which took them off from their Dependence upon God, he would never have given them divers Commandments: But fearing lest his People should perish through Ignorance, he still gave them new Commands, that by the help of them they might know their Sins and amend them; else God would never have constrain'd Man to any other thing, but to acknowledge him as the Superior of all Things: For God created him to take (d) his Delight with him in full liberty and without constraint, and was not willing to subject him to any other Law (e) but that of Love. By which we see that all the other Commands are but Accidentally appointed, because of the Sins that Men had committed at divers times, who if they would now return to this Dependence upon God, would have no need of any other Precept or Commandment; for all the rest are only Means to bring us to this Dependence upon God, and that we may see and discover all that hinders us from resigning our Will to God's, and that discovering them by the Commands, we may leave them and amend, and so may be able to return to this Dependence which was first enjoyn'd us as the one thing necessary for Salvation: And is still so now as well as then.

(c) *Gen.* 3. 17, 19. (d) *Prov.* 8. 31. (e) *Cant.* 2. 4.

The Twelfth Conference,

Shews, That there is one thing only to be done by us that we may be saved.

I said to her, ~~That it was~~ ^{no Bar} very agreeable to bear, that there was but one thing only to be done in order to Salvation: And that I would gladly take that short way.

She said: No, Sir, 'Tis true, there is but one thing only to be done that we may be saved (f): But there are many things to be parted with, which do greatly hinder and distract us. We neglect to do that which is necessary to attain to this Dependance, and we do that which alienates us from it. The Penitence which God enjoynd *Adam*. To gain his Bread with the Swear of his Face, is very little regarded among Men now. Every Body would live without Labour, and they esteem it a Happiness to have Riches that they may live in Ease. This is indeed to thwart the Means that God has so savingly taught us. After that *Adam* fin'd, and all Men in him, of his own free choice he left off this Dependance upon God, that he might become wise of himself: Thus he render'd himself miserable with all his Posterity: Because all the Miseries that we suffer are procured by the following our own Wills. We must not impute all our Miseries to *Adam*, but only to the Sins that we our selves commit. If we had no other but the Sin of *Adam*, we should need nothing but the Pennance of Labour to gain our Bread, and the enduring the Intemperance of the Elements: But our own Sins bring upon us a Thousand other Sufferings. If we would labour, and suffer Cold and Heat, or other Intemperances of the said Elements, and return again to the Dependance of our Wills upon Gods, (g) we should be very quickly restored to the Blessed State wherein *Adam* was created: For our Penitence should be accomplish'd in this short Life, which by the Mercy of God is much

(f) *Luke* 10. 42. (g) *Psal.* 81. 14, 17.

shortned ; and then we should enjoy an Eternal Bliss, which should never end : But since our Actual Self will would not depend upon God, but upon its self, bending it self to follow its own Inclinations, it has procured us a great Number of other Evils, which we attribute to God, pr. to *Adam* ; and if we consider them aright, we will evidently perceive that they derive their dominion from our Self-will, and not from any other thing : For our Diseases are ordinarily procured by our Intemperance in Eating and Drinking, or other Sensual Excesses which we commit to satisfy our own Will ; which oftentimes drives us to some State that causes us a Thousand Sorrows, or to some Employment, or Trade that brings us into great trouble of Law-suits, Quarrels, Vexations, or to Poverty and other Miseries. And the Cause of all this is, that we would not submit our Will to Gods, who would have govern'd us, as a good Father does his Son, we having chosen rather to follow our own Will, and to undergo all sort of Calamities in this World, and run the hazard of suffering far greater hereafter, which shall never end : For he who will not be guided by God, can never be saved ; since our own Conduct will lead us to the Abyss of all sort of Evils, both Temporal and Eternal : Because our own Will is ignorant, and rash, never content nor satisfied, never stopping for any sort of Evil : Even though it discover its Miseries it does not amend them, but imputes them to another, either to *Adam*, or even to God : And thus flattering our selves always in our own Will, we persist therein even to death, which gives beginning to a miserable Eternity : For no Body can be saved by himself ; and if we do not yield up our Will to God, from whom can we expect Salvation ? 'Tis a great Blindness, Sir, not to see these Truths, which are so evident, since we feel our Weakness, and know that we have receiv'd all from God, and that we can hope for nothing but from him. And notwithstanding of all these Considerations we will not resign our Will to his, choosing rather to be miserable, and to perish at last by following our own. We are unthankful to God, and cruel to our selves : For indeed, 'tis a great Ingratitude to deny God the only thing he demands of us, our own Will, having given us all other things ; and 'tis a great Cruelty to our selves to
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withdraw our Dependance upon God, and subject our selves to so many sorts of Evils.

I asked her, *How it was possible that Men should deny the yielding up their Will to God, since all appertains to him?*

She said: Sir, All the World does this in effect, and I know not so much as one Person upon Earth that will depend upon the Will of God: For every one will needs follow his own Will: Neither Small nor Great, none excepted, will resign their Will to God's, but will all depend upon their own. Is it a Wonder that I told you formerly, that no body could be saved after the way that Men live at present? This is an infallible Truth, which none has yet discovered because of the Universal Darkness that is at present in the World: Every one imagines that he will resign himself to God, while in the mean time there is no such thing: For if this were true, we should not see Men so forward to deal in Business, or Traffick, nor to run through Countries and Cities to heap up Money, nor to use underhand Dealings for Offices, Places, or Benefices: For every one placing his Dependance upon God, would labour to provide only for his Necessities and no more, knowing well that this Life is short, and that Necessaries suffice a Traveller, who studies not to load himself with Things superfluous or useless for his Journey, for they would be a Burden to him. All the Cares, the Toils, the Pursuits of Men for present Things, are so many Evidences which declare that we will not resign our Will to God's, but that we will follow our own, neglecting the Penitence that God has enjoynd us, that we may be advanc'd to Places, Honours, or Dignities, seeking to live at our own Ease, instead of labouring to satisfy the Penitence due to our Sins. We Act quite contrary to the Will of God; for we cannot be ignorant that he demands of us this Submission, and this Penitence. And withall we say by Word, that we are resign'd to God, and we look on it as a thing impossible, that we should deny him our Will! Which still discovers the more our Blindness.

I said to her, *That there was truly a horrible Darkness through the whole World; and that I my self was surrounded with it, while I believ'd that I would be resign'd to God, and in the meantime had many Cares yet for this present Life.*

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She said : Sir, You see that your Resignation is not true, so long as your Cares are yet for this Life. This would be a great distrust of God, if after you were resign'd to his Government, you should yet be careful for Temporal Things. Can God, who created all Things for Man, deny him his Necessities, when he shall be resign'd to him? If he (b) feed the Birds of the Air who do not labour, shall he not feed Man when he labours? We are full of false Perswasions, which flatter us to our Ruine. For it is certain that he who has resolved to resign himself to God, seeks no longer for Earthly Things, but for those which are Eternal. God makes him see evidently, that what is here Below is nothing but Transitory, which the Servant of God should not touch but by the by; for they are unworthy of a Soul dedicated to God, which cares no longer for any thing but to please him. And if you be careful for other Things, be assuredly perswaded that you are not yet resign'd to God: Because this Resignation consists in a cessation from all things to receive God only. And the less we Act our selves, the more we receive. There needs no more but TO CEASE AND TO RECEIVE: For all our Cares and Vexations, or Activities for the Things of this Life, are all Hindrances which stifle the Operations which God would make in our Soul. We must be quiet and rest, that we may suffer the Holy Spirit alone to Act. If our Will be resign'd to God, he will (i) govern it wisely. Let us leave our Souls to his Government, and labour to accomplish the Penitence due for our Sins, that we may have the Things needful for the Maintenance of our Body: And then we could truly say, that we are resign'd to God, and not before. For the Offices, Cares and Business of the World, are all Hindrances to this Resignation: And even the so many different Ways of Devotion that are now practised, are all great Hindrances; since nothing but this Resignation alone is necessary.

I said to her, That this little Word, Resignation, comprehended great Things, that nevertheless it was the Philosophers Stone for the Discovery of Eternal Treasures, to which I aspired.

(b) Mat. 6. 26. (i) Psal. 73. 23, 24.

She said : Sir, This Word, RESIGNATION TO GOD, comprehends (*l*) all Things : For he who is resign'd to him, knows him and loves him ; he knows also true Vertue that he may follow it, and the Falshood of Vices that he may avoid them : Because God gives himself to the Soul that is resign'd to him, and the Holy Spirit lives in it, and abiding in it, he replenishes it with his Gifts to know all Things, and with his Fruits to entertain it : So that all our Happines depends upon the resigning our Wills to God's, and not upon many different Things, as People imagine. That we may be restored into Favour with God, entirely converted to him, and out of all sort of danger, there needs nothing but this Resignation. If you are guilty (*m*), resign your self to God, he will immediately receive you; and convert you to himself; and if (*n*) you are afraid of his Judgments, and of these dangerous Times, resign your self to him, he will preserve and save you. There is nothing to be done but this only, *To resign our selves to God, and to continue in a Dependance upon Him.* Is it not a very Reasonable Thing that a Creature should abide in Dependance on its Creatour ? Must there be Constraints and Commands to oblige it to a Duty so just, so good, and advantagious ? There is no Law, Divine, Humane, nor Civil, that can give us a Dispensation from so just a Thing. Nevertheless, we Rebel against all sort of Rights to adhere to our own Will, which is so wicked and insolent, which precipitates us into so many sorts of Evils ; for all the Miseries which we feel in this Life, proceed from our Self-will : And as the Resignation of it to the Will of God (*o*) is the Accomplishment of all Good, so the Possession of it is the (*p*) Consummation of all sort of Evil : So that he who would be converted, needs only resign his own Will into God's Hands : In doing this he fulfils all the Law and the Prophets ; because they Teach us nothing else but the Means to attain to this Resignation.

I said to her, *That this being supposed, which was most true, That if we still acknowledge, that we depend upon God in all things, we have no need of any other Precept or Com-*

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(*l*) *Psal.* 73. 25, 26. (*m*) *Luke* 15. 18. (*n*) *Psal.* 18. 5, 7. (*o*) *Psal.* 37. 5, 7. (*p*) *Isa.* 65. 3.

mand, it was strange that she had taught me so many Means.

She said: Sir, I have told you of the State of the World, and of the Church, that you may no longer trust to them by a pious implicate Faith. I have told you also, that we are fallen into the Reign of Antichrist, fearing least you be deceived; and also that the World is Judg'd, that you may not flatter your self with false Hopes, believing that it will last yet, and so continue in sloth. I have also shewn you true Vertue, that you be not deceived by that which is so but in appearance; having also declared to you the Sins against the Holy Ghost, and those which we commit in another, that you may not be ignorant of any thing that can hinder this Resignation to God: For the Ignorance of Good and Evil would insensibly ruine us; and whereas we are fallen into the Times of Universal Darknes, the Common Enemy might very easily deceive you, as he does all the World, perswading you that you are resign'd to God, when you live yet intirely to your self. Therefore I have explained to you so many Things one by one, that you might discern aright Truth from Lies; and that you might certainly resign your self to God according to your desire. And because you can never do good without departing from Evil (q), nor depart from that without knowing it, I have therefore endeavoured to discover to you the Good and Evil that Reigns at present in the World, that I might give you the certain Marks whereby to know if you are truly resign'd to God, or not; and since the Commandments of God, and also the Law of the Gospel, are given us to discover what hinders us to be resign'd to him: That by this means we may remove all the Hindrances of our Resignation to God: Voluntary Poverty serving as a Mean to free our Self will from the desire of perishing Goods; Chastity to free this Will from desiring Carnal Pleasures; and Obedience to deliver us from the desire of fulfilling our own Will; and so of all the other Evangelical Counsels which teach us to depart from that which hinders our Resignation to God: Therefore I judg'd it necessary to declare to you all the Things that hinder this Resignation to God, and

(q) *Psal.* 34. 15.

those also which may serve as Means to facilitate this Resignation, which is the only Essential Thing that God (r) demands of all those who would be saved.

I asked her, *If it will be enough for me, absolutely to resolve that henceforth I will depend upon God, and no longer use my own Will in any thing.*

She said : This Resolution, Sir, is a great Beginning ; but 'tis to be feared, that we shall not put it effectually in Execution, because of our inveterate Evil Habits. Our Self-will having always born sway, how can we entirely subdue it, except by the Means that Jesus Christ has pointed out to us in his Gospel, which are as so many Steps to ascend to this Resignation ? For otherwise we might make false Suppositions, as we have done hitherto. But when we shall put in practise the Doctrine of the Gospel, we shall thereby discover, how far we have advanced in this Resignation to God : For if our Frailty had not needed these Means, God would not have taken Humane Flesh to come and teach us them : For he can do nothing that is useless. We must therefore fix here, Sir, and receive this Doctrine of the Gospel in its plain Literal Sense, which will teach us all things plainly to our Senses, by following of which we shall certainly attain to this Resignation : For this is the true, the shortest, and the most certain way. Though indeed God sent at divers times Prophets and holy Persons to tell Men by what Means they might recover this Resignation to God, yet none of them has done it so perfectly as Jesus Christ did when he was upon Earth : For he has omitted nothing, but has taught all so precisely, that Men will never stand in need of any other Instructions : For this is the last Mercy that God will shew to Men, who must not look for any thing after the Doctrine of Jesus Christ : And what was taught before or since, is not at all comparable to this Doctrine of the Gospel. If we would be sav'd, we must embrace and follow it ; for it teaches us all the necessary Means for fulfilling the Law of God.

(r) *Jos.* 53. 13.

The Thirteenth Conference,

Shews, That the Doctrine of Jesus Christ is the last that God will send into the World: And that the Holy Spirit comes to give now the perfect Understanding of it.

I asked her, *How this Doctrine of the Gospel could be the last Means that God would give to Men to bring them to Salvation, since we look yet for the Holy Spirit, who in these last Times must teach us all Things?*

She said: Sir, The Last Times began (s) when God became Man. He brought along with him upon Earth his Last Mercy, teaching Men by Word and Deed all that they ought to do and avoid, without omitting any thing of all that shall be necessary for them even to the End of the World: So that none have need of any thing else to be taught them. It is true, we shall have the Holy Spirit (t) in the End of these Last Times, into which we are now fallen; and he is already born upon Earth: But he comes not to bring us new Means of Salvation, but only (u) to lay before us those which Jesus Christ taught us when he was in the World, that we may clearly see (x) how far we are now estranged from them, and to give us the Light of Truth, that we may see the Way to return, and re-take the same Gospel-means, that we may recover the Dependance of our Will upon that of God, which is his First and Only Essential Command, without which no Body can be saved: For this is the least Thing that we owe him; and if we do not fulfil it, our Ingratitude is so great, that we cannot in Justice be saved.

I asked her, *If the Holy Spirit was born in Flesh, as Jesus Christ was in his Time? And what things he would teach us more than Jesus Christ has done?*

She said: Sir, The Holy Spirit is the same (y) God

(s) Gal. 4. 4. I Cor. 10. 11. (t) John 6. 13. (u) John 14. 26. (x) John 16. 9. (y) I John 5. 7.

with Jesus Christ, (z) who was the Word of God, as the Holy Spirit (a) is his Understanding. There is but One God only, but there are divers Powers. And as our Understanding knows more than our Mouth speaks, so the Holy Spirit will give more Light (b) than did the Words of Jesus Christ, though all comes (c) from one and the same God, and one and the same Source. What Jesus Christ said was understood by Men only in part (d), and the same Things shall be understood in a perfect and compleat Sense by this Wisdom of the Holy Spirit. He needs not take a Body of Flesh to speak to Men : For Jesus Christ did that sufficiently ; so that he needs speak no more : But there is need of more Understanding : For the Last Times are near their End : And before the World end, God will give the full Understanding of all that has been delivered in God's Name from the Beginning of the World, both by the Holy Prophets, and by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, or other Saints his Disciples. Nothing has been fully understood of all the Holy Scripture ; for even they who pronounc'd it, understood it not in its perfect Sense, but in part only : But now that the Holy Spirit is come upon Earth to give the full Knowledge of them, he needs not for this End a Body of Flesh ; but only to give Men Spiritual Understanding, that they may know the Powers of God, the Love he bears to Man, the End for which he created him, and may have the knowledge of True Vertue, and of that which is False. All these Things shall be known by the Understanding of those Men who will receive the Light of Truth which the Holy Spirit brings now into the World. *HE IS BORN* in the midst of its Universal Darkness, in which no Body knows the Truth of any Thing, all being falsified or not known. The Holy Spirit comes to clear this by Spiritual Notices.

I blest my good Fortune, and the Day in which I met with this Pilgrimeſſ ; for my Understanding received ſuch Light by her Diſcourſes, that I muſt confeſſ my Soul had periſh'd without this Rencounter : I asked her, How her Words could have ſuch ſtrong Operations on me ?

(z) *John* 1. 1. (a) *1 John* 5. 20. compare *1 Cor.* 2. 10, 11, 12. (b) *John* 16. 12, 13. (c) *Joh.* 16. 14, 15. (d) *1 Cor.* 13. 9.

Conf. XIII. *The Coming of the Holy Spirit.* 81

She said: Sir, This proceeds from the Holy Spirit, who begins to visit your Soul by his Light. Receive it with Humility of Heart, and he will enlighten you more: For he is come to fill the Souls of all those who shall receive the Truth. It is by the Operations that you feel that he is born in Souls. He is a Spirit, and he works in the Spirit of all who seek and desire him. We must not (e) any longer seek for visible and material Means: For all these things are Hindrances to him. Let us only open our Heart and Spirit to receive the Truth, and it will teach us all Things: For nothing but Lies has undone the whole World. The Darknes that Men are in, and their forgetfulness of God, have come by Lying, which has seiz'd on all the World: For none are (f) now in the Truth: The false Perswasions which they have imprinted on Mens Hearts, have made them mistake God and the State of their own Souls. There is therefore great reason to bless the Goodness of God, who in so miserable a Time sends us his Holy Spirit to enlighten all those who will receive him. I believe, Sir, you are the first; but a great Number will follow you: For as soon as the delusion shall be discovered, the Eyes of many will be opened, and their Heads lifted up, to return to God, abhorring their Errours, and the Deceit of their blind Guides. They will see, that all that they have taught them as Means of bringing them to God, have estrang'd them from him; and the Sacraments and other Ceremonies of the Church, instead of procuring them the Grace of God to love him and to acquire true Vertue, have given them rather a Contempt of God, and a false hypocritical Vertue. This being discovered, (g) many will seek the Truth, abhorring Lying, which has put their Salvation in so great hazard.

I asked her, *If the Holy Spirit would not become visible?*

She said: No, Sir; He will not be visible, but by the Operations which he will make in Souls whom you shall see disingaged from the Earth, and cleaving to God alone. We shall see them possess Joy, Peace, and Patience, with the other Fruits and Gifts, which will be sure Evidences that the Holy Spirit will dwell in their Souls, who not-

(e) *John* 4. 21-24. (f) *Hos.* 4. 1. (g) *Hos.* 5. 1.
F withstanding

withstanding shall not be seen by the Eyes of the Body in any Material Form or Figure: For the Time is come that (b) God will be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth, and no longer in Figures, which shall all cease because of the Accomplishment of all Things: And all that was figured in the Old Law shall be accomplished in full perfection by the Holy Spirit: For the Time is come, that all the Promises which God made to Men from the Beginning of the World shall be fulfilled, the Alliance that God (i) has promis'd to make with Men shall have its perfect Accomplishment: For they shall be his People, and he will be their God. This has not come to pass as yet. Though Men were created to be God's People, nevertheless they did not continue so; on the contrary, they committed so many Infidelities, that he was oblig'd to destroy them by a General Deluge; and though the Children of *Israel* were God's peculiar People, they forsook him notwithstanding, and gave themselves to Idolatry. The *Jews* who were as precisely God's People, denied him also, and would not acknowledge him when he became Man, but revil'd him and hang'd him on a Cross. And now the Christians, who ought more perfectly to be Gods People, despise him in his Sufferings, and in his Doctrine. So that the Alliance that God promis'd to make with Man, could not hitherto be accomplish'd. Of necessity the Holy Spirit must come upon Earth to enlighten Men, that they may have the Faithfulness requisite for this Alliance of God with Men: For a Marriage cannot be compleat if the Spouse be not faithful as the Husband is,

(b) 1 *John* 4. 24. (i) *Jer.* 32. 40.

The Fourteenth Conference,

Speaks of the Alliance that God will make with Men, and of the Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory; and that to have a Share in it, we must of necessity resign our Will to God, and return to a Dependance upon him.

I entreated her to tell me, *How, and when, and wherein, this Alliance of God with Men shall be made?*

She said: This Will be made by the Holy Spirit, who will illuminate Souls, make them know their Errours, and also the End for which they were created, which is nothing less, than to be joynd and united to God, who will take his Delight with Men (*k*): And they perceiving this, shall separate themselves from all Earthly Pretensions, and resign themselves to the Will of God, desiring no longer to use their own Wills, because they have entirely renounc'd them. Then shall they (*l*) have such Dispositions as will invite God down to the Earth, to Ally himself visibly and bodily with Men by an inseparable and indissoluble Tye. This is the End for which God cloath'd himself with a Humane Body, to make himself like to Man, that the Alliance he designed to make with him might be wholly perfect and compleat, both in Body and Spirit. What God promis'd (*m*) of Old to *Abraham*, could never be accomplish'd; because Men were never resign'd to God as they ought, having still us'd their own Free-will, without depending upon God. This did separate and divorce them from the Alliance which he promis'd them. But in this Fulness of Time, wherein we live, the Holy Spirit is come down to teach us all Things; and whosoever shall hear him, shall enjoy the promis'd Alliance: For (*n*) Jesus Christ will come very shortly upon the Earth in

(*k*) Prov. 8. 31. (*l*) Isa. 58. 11-14. (*m*) Gen. 17. 7.
(*n*) Rev. 22. 12.

Glory, to Joyn and Allie himself with all those who shall resign themselves to him. I cannot precisely tell the Day, Sir; but that it will be towards the End of the Plagues, which are now begun. But I can assure you that it shall be here, upon Earth (o), where God with Men shall enjoy a perfect Contentment, which shall be (p) Eternal: For the Presence of God made Man will unite them with such a perfect Love, that they can never again depart from him, though they shall still preserve their Free-will.

I felt in my Soul great Consolation in hearing her speak of the Alliance that God would make with Man, and ask'd, What I should do to attain to such a Happiness?

She said: Sir, You have nothing else to do for attaining to an Alliance with God, but to (q) resign your own Will to him, that he may dispose of it. This is the One Thing needful. So soon as you shall depend upon him in all things, you shall be betroth'd in order to the promis'd Alliance, and therein you shall find such Consolations as I cannot express to you. You shall then be as sure of this promis'd Alliance, as at least a Maid is to marry her Betroth'd, or a Man her whom he has Betroth'd, and much more: For the Promises of Men may be diverted by divers Accidents; but those of God are immutable, and will never change. So soon as Man resigns himself to him, he receives him (r), and treats with him as if he had never offended him, how great a Sinner soever he may have been. A Man must be void of Judgment, and very unthankful for such a Goodness of God, when he will not depend upon his Creatour, from whom he has received all Things, and who in requital of so many Benefits, demands nothing else but to acknowledge, that all he has comes from him? If he did this, he might lawfully enjoy all Things according to his Wish. Could God do more to Man than to let him rule over all Things, provided only that he would always acknowledge the Dependance that he had upon his God? And on the contrary, Could Man commit a greater Ingratitude than not to depend upon God, who created him, who preserves him, and from whom alone he can expect Salvation? We must have

(o) Rev. 5. 10. (p) Rev. 7. 15, 16, 17. (q) Prov. 23. 26.
(r) Ezek. 33. 12, 16.

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lost our Wits, and become cruel to our selves, if we deprive our selves of so great a Happiness, only that we may enjoy our Free-will, which often precipitates us into diverse kinds of Evils, that are sometimes irreparable : Because he who follows his own Will can never be saved, and the Mischief we sustain by Damnation can never be repair'd (s).

I said to her, *Never any had taken notice of so precise a Necessity of depending in every thing upon God for Salvation ; but they thought that whosoever died not in a mortal Sin was sav'd.*

She said : Sir, This Ignorance, not to know that we ought to depend upon God in all Things, is the Cause of the Ruine of all Men: Every one imagining that nothing else is necessary for Salvation but to abstain outwardly from evil Actions: This God did not declare to *Adam* when he created him for Salvation, but he expressly testified to him that he ought always to depend upon him, and acquiesce in his Will. What God did to *Adam*, he did in him to all Mankind. Therefore it is much better to hold to the First Commandment of God, than to amuse our selves with the Opinions of Men, who with their Studies and Notions give assurance of Salvation without any Ground. For all that they call *Mortal or Venial Sins*, are nothing else but the Hindrances which we make to this Resignation to God. Except this, there can be no Sin: For if this Resignation be not hindered, we are certainly saved: For Resignation in its self is Salvation. This we cannot observe, because so many other different Things are set before us to hinder the Knowledge of this Eternal Truth, to wit, *That God has never demanded, and never will demand in Time coming, any thing else of Man, but the Resignation of his Will to the Will of God.* And when it is said, *Thou shalt not kill, steal, nor commit fornication,* or other Evils, it is as much as to say in one Word, *Thou shalt not follow thy own Will, but that of God :* For the abstaining from all these Evils, is nothing else but the leaving off to follow our own Will, which incites us to do these Evils: For as soon as we shall resign it to the Will of God, he will lead us to all sort of Good: And

(s) *Mark* 8. 36, 37.

these Evils are particularly forbidden us, that we may thereby perceive when we are not resign'd to God : For this Resignation delivers us from all sorts of Evil, and by following our own Will we do certainly commit them. I wish all the World did comprehend this Truth, *That no Body can ever sin but in following his own Will, and no Body can ever be saved but by resigning his Will to the Will of God.*

I said to her, *It was most true, That to be saved we must resign our Will to that of God ; and that it was a loss that this was not taught to all Christians.*

She said: Sir, The Devil has now such Power over the Minds of Men, that he leads them wholly at his Will, and has razed out of their Memories the one thing needful, which is to resign their own Will to that of God : And that they may be insensible of this Forgetfulness, he has invented so many Means of Salvation, that no Body thinks of it, nor believes it necessary to resign his Will to that of God, imagining that it is enough for Salvation to go to Church, to frequent the Sacraments, and to get Indulgencies. This Blindness ruins all good Men : For none can any longer perceive that this Resignation is necessary ; and not perceiving it, they do not believe it. For this cause No body sets about it : For we see now the best Men are addicted to follow their own Wills in every thing, even in Eating and Drinking, and Walking : And generally all they do is regulated by their own Wills ; even their Vertues and Devotions are manag'd by their Self-will : And in the mean time they think they are in the way of Salvation : As if God had need of our Sacrifices, or our Prayers ; while he will have nothing else but the Resignation of our Wills to his Will. This no Body strives to do : On the contrary, every one, both Small and Great, of whatsoever Condition, follow their own Will. Christians do even train up their Children in the Habit of following their own Wills. In which they bring them up to their Damnation : Because being habituated from their Childhood to follow their own Wills, when they are grown up they can very hardly part with them ; and thus every one perishes without perceiving it. And he who declares these Truths, is opposed by all those who are infected with this Vice, who have no mind to part with it, perswading themselves without ground, that
this

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this Resignation is not necessary : Though it be most true that God demands nothing else of us : For he has no need at all of our Works, nor of our Words, nor Riches, nor Honour, nor any Created Thing, because he contains all in himself: But he has chosen our Will for himself, that it being united to his own, he might take his delight and pleasure in it. Consider a little, Sir, how far we stray from the Designs of God, while we thus use our own Will in all Things, without discovering the Wiles of Satan, who under good and pious pretences leads us at his pleasure from a Dependence upon God, and yet we do not perceive it.

I said to her, *That it was an Insatiation of Spirit, that no Body saw precisely the necessity of this Dependence, but they imagin'd it was enough to believe in the general, that God is our Creatour, and that we have receiv'd all from him.*

She said : Sir, Faith without Works (t) is dead. It is not enough that we believe by way of Speculation, *That we have received all from God;* but on the contrary, this belief will render us more guilty : For to believe that God is our Creatour, and that all Things appertain to him, and notwithstanding of this Belief, to desire to rule upon Earth as Sovereigns of our own Will, and not to submit it but by constraint to all that God permits to befall us against our own Inclinations, this is directly opposite to our Belief, and so is it to believe also that we received all that we have from God, and nevertheless to use all these things according to our Appetites and Inclinations, as all the World does. For he who has received a good Judgment, applies it to acquire Sciences, Offices, or Dignities in this World, forgetting that this Judgment pertains not to him, but God only gave it him that it might be applied to know and love him ; and if he apply it to any thing else, he must render a strict account of it. Nevertheless, no Body considers this: Every one thinks he is Master and Lord of his own Understanding, and may dispose of it independently according to his own Will. It is the same also with him who has Wealth ; he makes himself Lord and Master of it, even as if it belong'd to him in property : He employes it in Glory, Pomp, and Vanity, or other

(t) *Jam. 2. 26.*

Pleasures, of his Body or Mind, or in the Things to which he finds himself most inclin'd, as if he had created these Riches himself, and held them of none; and while he says by Word, that he has received all from God, yet notwithstanding he will not use them but according to his own Will: And thus by his Deeds (u) he belies what he says by Word: Thinking to deceive God he deceives himself, and is his own Ruine: For while we will use our own Will in all things, we withdraw from a Dependance upon God, which is so necessary for our Salvation.

The Fifteenth Conference,

Shews, how every thing must be used to keep us in a Dependance upon God.

I asked her, *How every thing ought to be used, that we may have this entire Dependance upon God?*

She said: Sir, We must first consider for what End we were Created: And seeing that it was to Love and Serve God, : we must apply our selves to nothing else, except by the by in necessary Things; reserving all our Affections for him who Created us for these Ends: And whether we have Wit, or other Talents of Body or Mind, or Riches, Honours, and Prosperity, we must never use these Things but for the Glory of God: Because all pertains to him, and we are but the Stewards of them, liable to give an Account: And we ought to manage them so well, that nothing may be used but by the Appointment and Will of God, which we ought always to inquire into and follow, and never our own Will; for it ought still to depend upon him, who gave it. Could God demand less of us than the Dependance of our Will on his, after he had given us our Body with all its Properties; and our Soul with all its Faculties; and this Beautiful World, with all that is in it,

(u) *Tir.* 1. 16.

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to enjoy them fully at our Will, with Joy and Ease, demanding nothing else for so many Gifts, Graces, and Privileges, but the Resigning of our Wills to his, notwithstanding of which, Man is so ungrateful, unthankful and unreasonable, as to deny it to his God, his Creatour? This Dependance of our Will, so small a Gift that God asks of us, should it be refus'd him, when we know that all comes from him, and that his Goodness has so advantageously bestowed Favours on us? Truly, Sir, this Ingratitude deserves that all the Creatures rise up against Man, to take Vengeance of the Injury he has done his Creatour, in denying him the Dependance of his Free-will, and that he will dispose of it himself. Even insensible Things are obliged by strict Justice to avenge such an Ingratitude. Which will be very speedily done: Because the Measure is full. All Men harden their Hearts, and stop their Ears against Gods Demand, *Of resigning their Wills to his Will*: None will hearken to it any longer. Therefore the Sentence of Universal Rods is given out, and shall not be revoked: Because none will revoke the Resolution that every one has taken of following their own Will in every thing, and will not depend upon God, as if we were our own Sovereigns.

I said to her, *There were yet some Persons in the World whose Wills were resign'd to that of God.*

She said: Sir, I know none of them: But I do not know all the World. If there be some yet scattered up and down the World, God will take them into his particular Care: But the General Judgment shall not be delayed for this: The Plagues shall encrease still, even till the Consummation of all Evil; and if they go on leisurely, it is to give Time and Leisure to Men of Good Will (w) that they may be converted and repent of their Ingratitude, yeilding up (x) to God the Free-will that he so freely gave them, to use it according to his Will. This is now done by few or none. We hear nothing else said, but, *I will be resign'd to God*, while in effect all the World follow their own Will. Some give themselves eagerly to Study, some to Trade, some to the Law, to Offices, Benefices, and that uncessantly, till every one has obtained their Pretensions:

(w) 2 Pet. 3. 9. (x) Psal. 31. 6.

And we settle our selves upon Earth as an abiding City, or as if we were created for this Miserable Life, here we build Tabernacles as if we were to remain in them always (y), while we see our Friends and Neighbours dye in a little time; and we know that none stays here, but every one dyes in his turn, some sooner and some later, without knowing at what Hour our turn will come. We are born in Miseries, in which we live and dye; without seeing any other End for our selves but Death, which may make us sufficiently comprehend that we are not created for this Life; but we must look for another: For God could never have had so low an End in creating us as the Miseries of this present Life, because in this he should have done an ill thing: Which (z) God can never do, seeing he is the Source of all Good, from whom no Evil can proceed. But our Self-will alone engenders all the Evils and Miseries that we suffer: For he who beats his Brains in Study, suffers for the Self-will or Inclination he has for Studies all the Inconveniences that are in this Employment: For God never demanded (a) Learning of any Body, though Men cover this with the Pretext of the Glory of God, yet there is nothing in it for the most part but Curiosity and Vain-glory, or some Designs of making some Fortune in this World. Another by his Self-will gives himself to Traffick, or the business of Merchandising, and will therefore endure Cares, Warchings, Fatigues, and Labours, to get a Little Heap of Money, or other Temporal Goods, which end with him, because he leaves them on the Earth, from whence he took them. One will be a Priest, or a Monk; another will Marry, or continue free: In one Word, All Men in the World study to follow their own Wills in every thing, without being willing to yield them to God, and notwithstanding, we think to go to Paradise while we refuse to resign our Will to him, which we ought to do, though he had never required it of Man: It should be offered him in Acknowledgment of so many Benefits received from our God.

I asked her, *If it was not lawful for every one to choose some State or Calling by which to gain his Bread?*

(y) *Psal.* 49. 12--15. (z) *Wisd.* 1. 13, 14. (a) *Eccl.* 12. 12. *Luke* 12. 11, 12.

She said: Yes, Sir, It is expedient that every one Labour, that he may have his Bread; for God has appointed Labour in Penitence for our Sins: It is a Holy and Sacred Thing to Labour, that we may fulfil the Penitence that God himself has enjoyn'd us. We are free also to choose some State: that of Marriage is instituted by God; but a free (b) Condition gives more leisure for converse with God, and to work out our Salvation, delivering us from the Cares and Vexations of the Government and Maintenance of a Family, which do often breed us many Distractions: But to choose humane Offices according to our Will, would prove great Hindrances to us, and are available only for this Life, which needs (c) but a little Food, and some Clothing to cover our Body, all the rest is superfluous, and a Burden to him that would obey God. Therefore all Places, Offices, or Benefices, of what kind soever, are great Hindrances to Salvation, because they respect only the Earth, and aim at nothing but the Wealth, Honours, or Pleasures of this World, which Things do certainly withdraw us from God (d), and even make us often wholly to forget him by the continual Employments, and Diversions which these Places, Offices, or Benefices, bring along with them, which are not only undertaken, by all means sought after, and desired, that thereby we may gain our Bread; but very often that we may be rais'd to Honour and Vanities, or that we may take with more Ease the Delights of the Body or of the Mind, or also that we may heap up Temporal Wealth: All which Things do certainly withdraw us from God. Nevertheless we see Christians now adays do Toil, and Sweat, and Labour to obtain some Place, Office, or Benefice; and they study all their Life-time to pursue what is pleasant, profitable, or honourable for them; and they believe they are Wise in so doing: As if their Happiness did depend upon this present Life, and it were needful to make some Fortune here. Which is a great Blindness of Mind.

I asked her, *If all Places, Offices, or Benefices, were evil, since it seem'd necessary and expedient that there should be Judges to maintain Order among the People; and also Priests, to teach what concerns Salvation?*

(b) 1 Cor. 7. 32, 34. (c) 1 Tim. 6. 8. (d) 1 Joh. 2. 15.

She said: Sir, All Places, Offices, or Benefices, are good in themselves; but the ill use that is made of them, renders them evil. If a Person should engage in any Office of Justice, or any other Secular Station, singly with a design to Labour to preserve the People in Peace, and to maintain Justice, and the Innocence of those whom others would wrong, this would be a great Charity to his Neighbour, and a great Merit and Satisfaction as to the Penitence that every one is oblig'd to accomplish during this Miserable Life: Because in taking the Cares and Labour of the Mind for a Pennance, we satisfy God in gaining our Bread by these Labours of the Mind; and besides this, we assist our Neighbour by good Counsel, and by maintaining him in his Right, and defending him against malicious Persons. He to whom God has given the Spirit and Capacity of doing this, will be doubly recompenced before God, provided he do it in a Spirit of Penitence in respect of himself, and of Charity in respect of his Neighbour. But it is much to be regretted, that Men now regard neither of these Ends: For if they could enjoy a good Pension due to any Office with little Travel, this is what they would love most: They seek not the Toils of it, but the Profits: Nor the maintaining of Policy, or Justice, but the Honour of Ruling over the People; and if it were only the Zeal of Policy and Justice that moved Men to engage into publick Offices, no good Men could stay in them any longer in these unhappy Times, wherein Policy, and Justice, is no longer observed. The Laws of Government are all made for the burthen of the Common People, and for the Ease and Relief of the Great Men, and those in Authority: And by the same Breath Justice is turn'd in their Favour. So that Offices, good in themselves, are become very evil, by the bad use which Men make of them now, who obey not in any thing the Ordinances of God, which are Penitence, and Charity to our Neighbour. But on the quite contrary, they will enjoy (e) instead of suffering; and take their Pleasure and Repose, instead of doing Penitence. If Merchants had the Spirit of Penitence, and Traded on design to procure Work to such Neighbours as were more fit for going about

(e) *Isa.* 22. 12, 13.

some Trade or Handicraft than to Labour the Ground, all this would be done in mutual Charity, accomplishing their Penitence; the one by working, and the other by taking care to send their Merchandises to the Places where they might be Retail'd: But the Intentions of these Men are far from the Designs of God: For instead of Trading singly for their necessary Maintenance, they do it only to enrich themselves, and to encrease their Glory and Vanity: So that instead of satisfying God by the Penitence of the Labours and Travels of our Business, by undergoing them we but encrease our Sins; and instead of exercising Charity to our Neighbour in giving him Wages for his Entertainment, People take their greatest Advantages from the Workman, and they give him as little as they can for his Labour. And thus we do not accomplish Penitence, nor yet exercise Charity to our Neighbour; but we Toil and Labour for the Goods of this Miserable Life as if we were Created for it, though we ought only to pass through it as Travellers (*f*) and Pilgrims. But we change all the Orders that God has established; and instead of fighting here in the Spirit of Penitence, we desire to Rule at our Pleasure; and instead of loving our Neighbour as our selves, we deny him sometimes Wages for his Labour, that we may enrich our selves the more, seeking nothing but our own Interest, without regarding the Loss or Inconveniency of our Neighbour: A certain Evidence that Charity is dead among Christians, even among Churchmen, who as the Fathers of Christians, and the Pastours of their Souls, should undertake Offices and Benefices out of pure Charity, (*g*) to Teach the Ignorant in the matter of their Salvation, and also to accomplish their own Penitence, in Labouring and Travelling to gain Souls to God, as the Apostles did. But instead of doing this, they seek after the Benefices that have the greatest Revenues, and the least Toil; and instead of Labouring in the Lord's Vineyard, they seek their Rest and Ease, doing as little Penitence as they can to satisfy God, as every one is obliged to do for himself: For their is neither Priest, Religious, Pope, Cardinal, Bishop, Prebend, nor any other, of whatsoever State or Condition,

(*f*) 1 Pet. 2. 11. (*g*) 1 Pet. 5. 1, &c.

who

who is not oblig'd to accomplish his Penitence here: For all having fallen in *Adam*, are subject to the Penitence that was enjoyned him, which ought to be known by all Men. The Saints did always Labour; Jesus Christ himself did so (*h*): His Apostles and Disciples never gave themselves Ease while they lived in this Life of Penitence. For that great Bishop and Father of Christians, the Apostle *St. Paul* says, (*i*) that he was never chargeable to any, but gained his Bread by working with his own Hands, besides the Travels and Labours which he did undergo (*k*) to Teach the ignorant the Doctrine of the Gospel, performing thus (*l*) his Penitence by his Labour, for his own Sins, and exercising Charity to his Neighbour by the Sweat and Labour of Troublesome Voyages. Consider, Sir, how far Men are now from observing the Ordinances of God? How every one strives to resist them. For neither Small nor Great submits to Labour to perform his Penitence, but all willingly Labour to gain Money, or to take their Pleasures, or to make themselves be Honoured in this Miserable World; regarding more those Things which pass away, than those which are Eternal, or to say better, regarding and obeying more our own Will than the Will and Ordinances of God. Is it a Wonder if such Sins draw down the Vengeance of God upon our guilty Heads, since no Body will undergo the Penitence that God has enjoyned to all Mankind, but every one will needs follow his own Will, and Labour to make himself happy in this Miserable Life, which was given us to do Penitence in, and not to take our Pleasures in it? If so many Miseries beset Men for one only Disobedience that *Adam* committed, what ought we to expect for so many Crimes and Contempts of the Ordinances of God, which we commit daily? We are astonished to see the Beginnings of Sorrows by Wars, and also Disorders and Confusions in States, and in the whole World, and we ought rather to be astonished at the Goodness of God, that he endures so long the Rebellion of his Creature Man, who is come to such a height of Ingratitude that he will no longer acknowledge, in any thing, the Dependance that he has

(*h*) *Mark* 6. 3. (*i*) *1 Theff.* 2. 9. (*k*) *2 Cor.* 11. 23.
 &c. (*l*) *Col.* 1. 24.

upon his Creatour, but will Enjoy here where he ought to Suffer, and take his Pleasures where he ought to do Pennance: And yet nevertheless, dare lift up his Head, and believe that he shall have Eternal Life, notwithstanding of his Ingratitude, and his Disobedience to him who alone can save him! We would make God to become unjust, if we could: For we will not at all depend upon him, but upon our own Will: Neither will we suffer and do Pennance in this World, but rather Enjoy and Reign in it: And notwithstanding of all these Oppositions to God, we would oblige him to save us! Which would be against his Righteousness: Because Salvation belongs only to those who resign their Wills to that of God, and who do and fulfil the Pennance that God himself has enjoined us. Which no Body does: And all the World say, That they shall be Saved. In which every one deceives himself: For God will still exercise his Exact Righteousness without respect of Persons: He cannot save those who are not Resigned to his Will, no more than those who will not fulfil here the Pennance which Sin has merited: Because he will still accomplish his perfect Righteousness: Therefore Jesus Christ says, (m), *Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who shall do the Will of my Father*; which is no other, but that Man of his own Free-will subject his Will to Gods Disposal, who having ordain'd him to gain his Bread by the Sweat of his Face, will never change his Ordinances: For he is unchangeable: And if Man withdraw himself from him, God in Reason and by an Upright Judgment will reject him; since Man has no Right to deny this Dependance upon his God: from whom he has received all Things, and himself.

I asked her, *Whether our Salvation depended only upon this Resignation of our Will to that of God?*

She said: Yes, Sir, our Salvation (n) depends solely on this Resignation of our Will to that of God: For it comprehends all the Laws, and all sort of Vertues: Because having resigned our Will to the Will of God, we live no (o) longer, but God lives in us, who works all his Will without opposition. He Acts in us; He Labours in us,

(m) Mat. 7. 21. (n) Psal. 31. 6. (o) Gal. 2. 20.

and satisfies (p) our Penitence: So that the Soul has nothing more to do, but to receive from God, and delight its self in the Operations which he works in it (q); and needs not any longer seek for means of its Salvation without its self, for it possesses the Giver thereof. The Soul that is resigned to the Will of God, does possess all sort of Vertues, since God is pleased still to exercise his Goodness, and to give his Graces where he finds no longer any opposition. He Adorns the Soul with all sort of Vertues, which he Infuses in it with all the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit: So that the Soul which is Resign'd to God, has no longer need of any Laws, or Rules, or Means; because God does govern the same immediately and independently from all Things. To this Dependance only our Salvation is annex'd, without which we cannot obtain it: Because this is the only Thing that God demands of Man, and he will never demand any other thing to make him eternally happy, neither shall he ever obtain Salvation without this Dependance: Because he who denies it to God, is rebellious and unthankful, while he will not depend upon him from whom he holds all that he has. If he dye in this Ingratitude, he must by straight Justice go to Hell, since he denies God a Thing which is so lawfully due to him, as the Dependance of a Creature upon its Creatour. Nothing can ever be demanded that is more equitable, and nothing can be more damnable than to use our Free-will in prejudice of the Designs that God had, in creating Man Ruler over all, provided he acknowledged his Dependance upon the Will of God. And as *Adam* lost himself by quitting this Dependance, so all Men ruine themselves who do not submit their Will to that of God: Because their Salvation depends on doing this, and not on many other things which they teach us as necessary to Salvation: All which cannot save us without this Dependance: For his Law cannot save us, nor all our Devotions and Means, unless they bring us to this Dependance of our Wills on the Will of God: All other Things put together cannot save us.

I said to her, *That Men were very blind in this Matter, and very far out of the True Way: For they do not suppose,*

(p) *Rom.* 8: 26. (q) *Heb.* 13. 21.

That we must have our Will resigned to God thus independently from our own; but that to be saved it is enough, to acknowledge, That God is Sovereign over all, and that also we keep his Commandments.

She said: Sir, I greatly pity the Blindness of Men: Because they go astray under false Suppositions of their Salvation. This is Faith to believe that God is the Sovereign of all Things: But this Faith is not sufficient for Salvation: It must be (r) accompanied with the Works of Faith, that according to our Belief, we may give to God the sovereign and absolute Dominion of our Will, and that he may thereby operate his Will in us. This Resignation is the Work of our Faith: Without this Work we have only a dead Faith, which cannot save us, but would serve for our greater Condemnation: For (s), He who knew his Masters Will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. To know that God is the Sovereign of all Things, and not to yield up our Will to be governed by him, is worse than not to know his Sovereignty: Because this Faith and Belief obliges us to resign our selves wholly to him; whereas the Ignorance of this Faith might in some manner excuse us, for a time, because we are obliged to search and find out all things necessary for our Salvation: If we be ignorant of them at one time, we must study to learn them at another: For Ignorance does not excuse Sin. God has given us an Understanding for no other End but to Know and Love him, and to know what is necessary for Salvation. If we apply it to other Things we are deceived and amused by the Enemy, who is well pleased to divert our Understandings to Earthly Things, that we may perish through Ignorance, or by the Straying of our Minds. He who thinks to be saved because he has not Killed, Stolen, nor committed the other Sins contained in the Decalogue, is greatly deceived: For these things are not (t) spoken but for Malefactors, who quitted a Dependance upon God to follow their own Wills, in doing which they fell into all the Sins contained in the Ten Commandments: Which moved the Goodness of God to give them this Decalogue, that they might

(r) *Jam. 2. 22, 24, 26.* (s) *Luke 12. 47.* (t) *1 Tim. 1. 9, 10.*

discover their Sins, and abstain from them in Time coming. For before these Sins God never gave any other Law to Man but this of resigning his Will to the Will of God: So that he who should abstain from committing the Sins contained in the Decalogue, should not be saved if withal he did not resign his own Will to that of God: because it is not enough to depart from Evil; we must also do Good; and having no Good but what comes from God, of necessity, that we may do Good, we must be resigned to him, because our own Will leads us always to Evil. By which it appears clearly, that the Resignation of our Will to that of God is the only Mean of our Salvation; and that no Body shall ever obtain it by any other way than by this Resignation of Will to God.

I said to her, *That this being so, it had been desirable, that never any thing else had been Taught Men: And that so many other Precepts and Means had made them hope for Salvation without Ground.*

She said: It is true, Sir, It had been better never to have been instructed in any thing else but in the Obligation we have to resign our Will to that of God. This was purely true, and Man could not fall into any Error by this Doctrine; but it was also very good, that after we had quitted our Dependance God gave us the Ten Commandments, that by their Means we might know our Faults, without the knowledge of which we might have perished through Ignorance, as every one does now by being ignorant That to be saved our Will must depend upon God. For every one uses his own Will at his pleasure, without considering, that in doing this he cannot be saved. Even so they went on in all the sorts of sins contained in the Ten Commandments, and in the mean time believed they were resigned to God, as we now believe we are, while we follow our own Will. These Commandments were necessary Means to make us return to a Dependance upon God: For all those Sins do hinder this Dependance, and do oppose the Works which God works in us. They must be removed before God have the Dominion of our Souls, and ere he can govern them according to his Will: Even so we must deny our own Will, if we would obtain Salvation: For it is still opposed to the Will of God, doing its Works either at the Will of the Devil, or else according to our natural Inclinations.

clinations. Which cannot be but evil. If they had only taught the Commands of God as necessary Means to be resigned to him, this had been a desirable Thing : For by showing that whosoever is resigned to God, does not Kill, nor Steal, nor do any thing contrary to the Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth of God, they would discover to all those who did commit such Things that they forsook their Dependance upon God, and followed their own Wills ; that the knowledge of this might make them return to God, whom they had forsaken. But many other Means which they have taught as necessary for Salvation, prove rather Means to hinder it : Because many outward Devotions, the Ornaments of Churches, Images, Beads, a great many Books and Prayers, with a Thousand other Practices which neither God nor Jesus Christ taught, prove great Hindrances of the Resignation of our Will to that of God : For instead of having our Spirit free to let God Act in it what he shall find meet, we fill it with our own Affections, and keep our Will fixt to some Image, Prayer, or Devotion, which pleases our Humour. And thus our Soul not being empty, God cannot fill it. Thus we live and dye in amusing our selves with the Hopes of Salvation without any ground : Because it ought to be founded only upon the Resignation of our Will to that of God. That which we least think of is the most necessary.

I said to her, *Since this Resignation of our Will was the only thing needful, we ought to fix upon it, and that neither Books, nor Study, nor any other Means were any longer fit for attaining to Salvation ; and that Man was very void of Judgment in burthening himself with so many other things.*

She said : Sir, Man is truly void of Judgment, while he amuses himself with so many different Things, since there is but one thing necessary (u). All the rest is superfluous, and useless. There is no need of Studies, nor Benefices, that we may resign our selves to God, nor of Honours, nor Riches, nor Places and Dignities : For all this respects the Earth only and Humane Accommodations. A little Aliment will serve for this short Life. Alas ! why should we vex and amuse our selves to make up a Fortune here,

(u) *Luke* 10. 42.

which must remain on the Earth, and all Humane Delights must dye with us! Is it not a great Folly to embroil our selves in Places, Offices, and Benefices, for so short a Time as this Life lasts, during which we have no need of any thing, but a little Meat and Drink, with some Cloaths to cover our Body. No Body has need of any thing else, neither King nor Pope, more than others, with all their Wealth and Grandeurs, but this little Aliment; and whether we leave behind us at death Land or Money, 'tis all the same thing. The Body rots in the Ground, and we carry nothing away, the Rich no more than the Poor, the Noble than the Beggar. Death levels all without any Preference. Must not a Man be very void of Judgment to desire Goods which are a Burthen to us, painful to get, troublesome to preserve, and grievous to be parted with? What a folly does he commit who from his Youth gives himself to the Study of Letters, or other Sciences, on design to attain to some Office and Dignity, and when he has attain'd it, reckons himself happy? As if any Happiness could be found in Miseries! And does not discover that truly the Wealthiest and the Greatest are the most miserable, and subject to more Cares and Vexations, to more Fatigues, and greater Accounts to be charged on their Souls and Consciences: For he who has but a small Labour sufficient for the maintenance of his Life, without pretending to more, is a thousand times happier than a Rich and Great Man in this World, and has also a far less Account to render to God: For Offices and Riches lay great Obligations on him that possesses them: So that what we imagine to be a Happiness, brings upon us great Mischief, robbing us of our Time, which ought to be employed only in fulfilling our Penitence, and also exposing our Souls to many Hazards of their Salvation; and it wholly hinders the Resignation of our Will to that of God. For he who covets the Offices, Honours, Riches and Grandeurs of this World, (x) cannot be resigned to God, because all these things proceed from our own Will, seeing that of God aims at no other thing but Eternity, whereas all that is Temporal and passes away, is opposite to it. We would laugh to see a Pilgrim heap on his Head

(x) 1 John 2. 15,

or Shoulders the Earth which he should only tread upon, that he may advance in his Journey; and we think we are very wise in Loading our selves with Gold and Silver, which should only serve us for a Foot-stool, and we oppress our Understanding with Cares, Studies and so many different Distractions; whereas we have but one thing only to care for, which is to resign our VWill to that of God, and (y) to live without Care in this Resignation of our Will to his. This is all that God will always demand of Man, without obliging him to any other Thing: And when we amuse our selves with so many different Things, we Act against the Command of God, and we follow our own Will. For one will cover to become an Attorney, Advocate, or Counsellour; another to be a Merchant, Shop-keeper, or Tradesman; one becomes a Priest, another enters into a Religious Order; another desires to be a Prebend, Bishop, Cardinal, or Pope: And when they have attain'd to all these Pretensions, they are only filled with Wind: Because all this passes away, (z) as the Vapour that vanishes in the Air: And very often when we think to take our ease under the Favour of some great Fortune, we immediately go down into the Grave, where Death puts an End to all our Employes, and renders all our Pretensions vain: For by following our own Will, we can never have acquired any thing for Heaven; and God would nor be just if he should reward eternally the Works that we do for the Earth, or with respect to the Creatures. We are deceived if we believe it; because all that respects the Earth is recompens'd on the Earth.

(y) *Matth.* 6. 25, &c. (z) *Psal.* 146. 3, 4. *John* 2. 17.

The Sixteenth Conference,

Shews, How the Resignation of our Will to that of God, is a Continual Prayer; that it supplies all particular Doctrines and Practices; and that the Gospel directs us only to the removal of the Obstacles which hinder it, the discovery of which is necessary.

I asked her, If it was needful to use any longer the Means of Devotion when one is resigned to God? If it was any longer needful to Pray, to Watch, to Fast, to go to Church, to frequent the Sacraments, to procure Indulgences, to Honour Images, especially that of the Virgin Mary, which Devotion they tell us is necessary for Salvation, with many other things which seem to be good?

She said: Sir, The Resignation of our Will to that of God supplies all Things; and when we are arrived at this Resignation, we have no longer need of any Means: Because God works then in us what pleases him; and we have no longer need to (a) Act, but to be still and passive. Our Devotions are then without ceasing, and we pray always when we are always resigned to God: For Prayer is nothing else but an Elevation of the Spirit unto him, and it is elevated unto him as long as we receive all from his Hands, and are pleased every Moment with what he ordains. This is the continual Prayer which he demands of Man, saying, That we (b) must always pray, and not faint. He who lifts up his Heart to God only when he is in the Church, or sayes his *Pater Noster's*, does not pray always: Because he cannot be always in the Church, nor mutter his Prayers from Morning till Night: But he who resigns his Will to that of God prays continually, whether he eat, drink, walk, or take his rest: He is

(a) Gal. 2. 20. (b) Luke 18. 1.

always by his Will united to God, and has no need of other Means; because he is arrived at the End, where Means would be a Hindrance to him. He still watches (c) when he is ready at all times to follow the Will of God. He fasts always. when he never takes but what is simply necessary for him in which God directs him. He is always in the Church when he is continually in the presence of God. He frequents also the Sacraments as long as his Spirit converses with God, who comprehends in himself all that is Holy or Sacred. He has the Remission and Indulgence of all his Sins by the Resignation that he makes of his Will to that of his God, because he can never attain to this Resignation without forsaking all sort of Evil; and this (d) is true Repentance, which obtains the Remission of all Sins. He has no need of Images when his Eye and his Heart is fixt upon the Will of God, which makes him remember whatsoever is good and just; and he has no longer need of Intercessours for his Salvation, since he is united to the Will of Him who only can give it.

I said to her, *That I saw clearly enough that all our Salvation and Happiness did depend upon this Resignation of our Will to that of God: But that it was a Loss that this was not taught to all the World, who believed they were sure of their Salvation by the Means of Devotions.*

She said: Sir, It is a Lamentable thing that all the World should perish for want of knowing the Truth. Secular Persons think they are good when they Trade and do their Business without Fraud, though they never consider that they are sent into this World to lead a Life of Penitence, and are created to be always united in Will to God. Churchmen or Religious Persons believe they shall be saved, provided they go to Church and perform their customary Devotions, without thinking that to be saved they must be resigned to the Will of God. And thus both the one and the other perish through Ignorance, because all in general are created to be resigned in Will to the Will of God, depending immediately upon him; and not on other Things: And though we are obliged to Labour in this Life, yet this is but accidentally, and to

(c) Cant. 5. 2. Luke 12. 35, 36. (d) Prov. 28. 13.

satisfie the Penitence due for our Sins; not that God has created us for Labour, but only ordain'd it for Penitence: And instead of fulfilling it by our Labour, we encrease our Sins by the same Means by which we ought to purge them, glorying in our Chains, and rejoycing in our Vallie of Tears: And we will Act, where we ought only to Suffer; and Rule, where we ought to be Subject. This falls out through our Ignorance, for we do not know the True way of Salvation, and we imagine we shall find it by Means which divert us from it instead of bringing us to it. They go sometimes to a Cloyster to find the sure Means of Salvation, and in the mean time all the Exercises that must be performed are often Diversions from God: For so many outward Rules and Gestures prove great Hindrances to the Conversation the Soul ought to have with its God; and these Studied Devotions are often Hypocrisies. If we bow the Knee to shew that we adore and pray to God, while our Thoughts are far from him, this is pure (e) Hypocrisie: If we give Honour or do Reverence to some Image without railing our Thoughts to that which it represents to us, this is pure Idolatry: If we pray to God with the Lips, and the Heart is far from him, it is a Contempt of God: If we use Mortifications of the Body, without the Spirit of Penitence, it is the Pride of Life, for we desire to be esteemed more than others because of our particular Pennances, when God has appointed us all in general common Ones which would be much more for our Salvation: For he who willingly suffers Heat, Cold, and other Incommodities of the Elements, or of our Body, does merit much more than he who chuses Fastings, Watchings, and other things according to his own desires: Because these things are done by our own Will, and will be recompenced only in this VWorld: But the Pennances that are common to all Men are Ordained and Chosen of God for saving Penitences. In which these Penitents do greatly deceive themselves in following their own VWill, and often will not bear patiently with a VWord that contradicts their Behaviour. The Blindness of Men now may truly be bewailed; for in all Things they take Falshood for Truth, and the way

(e) *Mat. 7. 8.*

of Damnation for that of Salvation. Which would be easie to make appear to all the World, in case they would give Ear to it : For there is but one only thing needful, which is, for Men to resign their Will to that of God : But they are so preoccupied with so many different sorts of Means, which they perswade them are good Things, that they should think they did Evil in resigning their Will to that of God, choosing rather to submit it to a Man subject to his Passions, having forgotten that the Holy Spirit said, (f) *Wo to the Man that puts his confidence in Man.* Take, Sir, this Lesson to your self, and put not your Confidence in any but God. For (g) *all Men are Lyars*, and cannot give Salvation to those to whom they promise it. We have but one only Saviour, who is Jesus Christ ; and one only Essential Commandment, which is, to **DEPEND UPON GOD IN ALL THINGS** : If Men have taught so many different Things, and filled the World with Books to shew that we must depend upon them, do not believe them, *for one thing only is needful* (h).

I asked her, *Why she had shewn me so many different things since we began our Conferences, seeing there is one thing only needful, as I am certainly perswaded ?*

She said : Sir, I never taught you any other Means of Salvation but the Doctrine of the Gospel, which is sufficient to bring back the greatest Sinners in the World to a Dependance upon God : Because that Doctrine teaches how to remove all that might hinder this Resignation to God : And when it says that (i) *we must deny our selves*, it tells us that we must be resigned to God ; and in saying that we must *take up our Cross*, it shews the Penitence that we are obliged to perform in this World ; and when we consider the whole Life of Jesus Christ, we are thereby sufficiently taught that we must not rule in this World, nor seek after Dignities, Offices or Traffick, nor build Cloisters or other Edifices, nor lay up Riches here : For his whole Life and Conversation was quite another thing, and he has not at all taught us the Customs that are observed at present ; but Goodness (k), Humility, and

(f) *Jer.* 17. 5. (g) *Psal.* 116. 11. (h) *Luke* 10. 42.
(i) *Mat.* 16. 24. (k) *Mat.* 11. 28.

(1) Poverty. These Things are the true Means to attain to this Dependence upon God; because they remove the Hindrances of our Soul, that thereafter it may resign it self the more easily and freely unto him. Jesus Christ has taught that we are to forsake many (m) Things which prove Hindrances of this Resignation to God: For he who loves the Riches, Honours, Pleasures and Delights of this World, cannot be resigned to God; nor yet he (n) who loves his Father, his Countrey, or even his own Life. By reason therefore of the Blindness of Men, it was needful that he should manifest to them in particular what they ought to forsake that they may be resigned to God. For if Jesus Christ had only said simply that a Man must be resigned to God, every one would have said or imagined, that they lived in this Resignation; because they have not Faith but in Speculation, for they imagine they are resigned to God, when they live in a Dependence on their own Will, or that of some Person to whom they submit: And since Jesus Christ came to bring Light into the World, it was necessary that he should open our Eyes by all the Means contain'd in his Gospel, that he might make us see how many Obstacles we put to this DEPENDANCE.

I said to her, *She had declared to me many things besides those which are contained in the Gospel: And since Dependence only upon God was sufficient for Salvation, I might very well have remained ignorant of the Sins of Men, the poor Estate of the Church, the Dominion of Antichrist, with so many other things, which do not concern my Salvation.*

She said: Sir, You imagine that these Things do not concern your Salvation, because they do not respect it directly, but indirectly. They respect it in such a manner, as I believe it would be impossible for you to obtain it if you were ignorant of the truth of so many dangerous Evils. You would build your Salvation upon false Suppositions of being resigned to God, when there were no such thing; and if you have not the knowledge of Evil, you cannot avoid it, but will be deceived to your Loss. For the Wickedness of Men is now so covered over with Vertue, that 'tis hard to distinguish the one from the other.

(1) Mat. 8. 20. (m) Luke 14. 26, 33. (n) Ibid.

If you perceive not that Men are deceitful, they will deceive you every Moment; and if you believe not that they have forsaken God, you will imitate them, believing that they do well: This pious Opinion of your Neighbour will make you follow Evil insensibly. Thus we must not walk blindly in the matter of our Salvation: For you have more need to discover Evil, that you may avoid it, than Good, to imitate it: Because if your Will were resigned to God without knowing the Wickedness of Men now, they would certainly draw you back from this Resignation to make you take your own Will: And this under pious Pretexes: For they will reckon you to be deceived if you do not follow their wayes of Acting; and if you be resigned to God, you will contract his Qualities of Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth: Which Men will not at all acknowledge, but will take your Righteousness to be Self-preciseness; and your Goodness to be Silliness and want of Wit; and your Truth will be reckoned Detraction as soon as by it you shall discover their Evils: And all this they shall do so dexterously, that you shall be puzzled to know, whether you will not do better to follow their Sentiments than the Direction of God. Therefore it is so necessary that you know the Wickedness of Men, that you be not deceived by it. And if I have declared to you the poor Condition in which the *Roman Church* is now, I have done it more out of Charity than to make known to you the Works of God: Because so long as you believe that this *Roman Church* is the Holy Church, you will take up with a Dependance upon Her instead of depending upon God; and will indirectly follow the Devil, while you believe you follow God: And if I had not declared to you that we are now in the Reign of Antichrist, you would certainly be deceived, because he Acts his greatest Villanies under the Cloak of Holiness, and introduces his Adherents into the most Eminent Preferments and Dignities of the Church: That (o) he may seduce the very-Elect, if it were possible: For now more than Three Fourths of People are bound to the Devil (p) by expresse Covenant. And if you be ignorant of all these Truths, by what Means shall you avoid their Snares?

(o) *Mat.* 24. 24. (p) *Rev.* 13. 4.

As long as the Devil shall tempt you by evil Thoughts, you will not be in danger of following his Suggestions; but when he has on his Side, the Priests and the Religious, the Bishops and other Prelats of the Church, you will easily let your self be governed by them, thinking that they are guided by this Spirit of God, though in effect, by that of the Devil. By all which Things you may sufficiently discover the need you have to be informed of all these Evils when you desire to resign your self to God, or else your Resignation will not last: Because Men, the Church and Antichrist, would very shortly find the Means to draw you back, as they do almost all well-disposed Persons, perswadeing them, that it is fit still to have a good Opinion of our Neighbour, and that we must also depend upon the Church, and that the Priests and the Religious are true Members of it: Though in the Sight of God there is no such thing: For all Men together are as a Deluge of Vices, and the *Roman Church* is the *Babylon* of Confusion, and many of her Pillars are the Members of Antichrist. This being supposed, Sir, do you not think I had reason to declare to you all these things in particular, that you may not be deceived by so great an Abyss of Evils, which would be but too sufficient to hinder you from this **RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD**, which is the only thing necessary for Salvation, to which you can never attain without discovering and removing all the Hindrances which out of great Charity I have manifested unto you?

The Seventeenth Conference,

Is a Recapitulation of all the preceding Matters, their Scope and Use.

I thanked her greatly for the Goodness she had shewn me in telling me so many things so profitable for my Salvation, promising to observe them as much as I can.

She

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She said : Sir, In this Practice consists your Salvation : For it matters little to know all the Conduct of the World, and all its Sciences and Secrets : If all this serve not as Means to work out your Salvation, all (g) is Vanity and Amusement : Even Knowledge will serve for our greater Condemnation when we do not put in practice what we know to be good, and do not avoid and hate what we know to be evil. I would not have enlarged in declaring to you so many things of good and evil, if I had not observed in you a desire to put them in practice : For to know the Essence of Vertue without practising it, is nothing else but vain Speculation ; and to know Evil without avoiding it, is a worse Curiosity, which fills our Understanding without any Fruit. I have spoken (r) of *true Vertue*, that you may follow it rather than what is false ; and also of *the Roman Church*, that you may not follow her as if she were Holy. I have told you of *the Reign of Antichrist*, that you may not let your self be deceived by false Appearances of Piety : declaring to you *that more than Three Fourths of the World are in confederacy with him*, that you may work out your Salvation with Fear, and may trust your self to No body, for the most Wicked are the greatest Hypocrites that they may deceive the better. I have told you, *That we are in the Judgment, and that the last Plagues are begun* ; that you may not put off your Conversion to another time ; for that which remains to us is short. I have told you that *Jesus Christ will come upon Earth to judge the Good and the Wicked, and that he will root out all Evil*, that you may aspire after that Happinels, and may decline the Misery of those who shall be sent into Hell. I have told you that *Jesus Christ will abide upon Earth, to Reign there with all the Just for ever* : that the Expectation of this Glorious Coming may give you Strength to bear with patience the Rods and Tribulations which must shortly fall out, such as the like hath not yet been seen. I have told you, *that the World will last for ever, and that none of the Creatures shall perish in their Kinds* : that the Hope of your Blessedness may not be founded upon imaginary Goods, and that you may in some manner

(g) Eccles. 12. 8, 9, 12. (r) You will find the Places where all these Matters are treated of by the Index.

comprehend

comprehend what Contentment the Souls and Bodies of the Blessed shall have when all Malignity shall be removed from every thing, and all the Elements and other Creatures shall serve for the Delight of Man, who shall rule over all, being united to Jesus Christ in Body and Soul: And this, that you may willingly despise the Delights of this present Life, in the Hope of those of which are to come. I have told you, *that the Jews shall be converted to God, and shall be his People; and that the Catholicks shall be cast off and rejected:* that you may never despise any Body, since the Jews, the most despised of all Nations, shall be the most exalted; and of Stones shall be made (s) *Children of Abraham;* and that you may willingly quit the Maximes of the Roman Church, which for her evil Deeds shall very shortly be rooted out. I have told you, *that Man is created for no other end but to take his delight with God:* that you may no longer seek for any thing upon Earth, and that you may despise all Things, to enjoy this Conversation with God; having told you also, *that this present Life is only a time of Penitence,* that all your Labours may be done in this Spirit of Penitence, to which God has subjected all Men for their Sins. In fine, I have told you, Sir, *That all the Laws, the Prophets, and all Vertues, do consist in the Resignation of our Will to that of God:* that you may not be distracted by so many other different things, but may pass your Life joyfully under this Dependance upon God, which is the least thing we can give to God for so many good Things we have received from him, which he permits us to enjoy provided we will depend upon him in all Things. I have also shewn you, *That so many divers Means which the Priests, Monks, and the Religious have taught us for working out our Salvation, are things that withdraw us from it, by which we are seduced and deceived:* For they make us depend upon Men more than upon God: Which is an Idolatry that has infected all Christendom, in which no Body studies any longer to resign his Will to that of God, but every one enjoys and disposes of Things at his own Will, as if he were his own Sovereign. One will be Great, and another Rich; one will Rule over others, and will be Obey'd and Serv'd; one goes in a Coach, another

(s) *Matth. 3. 9.*

Cont. XVII. *The Abridgment and Scope of all.* 111

upon Horse: In short, Every one will follow his Delights and Pleasures according to his own Inclination, believing notwithstanding that they work out their Salvation, because the Priests and Monks promise it to them. These are new Gods and new Saviours, who have changed the Order established by God, our Father and Creatour, and the Duties which his Son Jesus came to teach us. They lead us in the Way to Hell, perswading us that 'tis that to Paradise: With these Perswasions every one suffers himself to be deceived and seduced, there being none now in Christendom who believe that they cannot be saved without resigning their Will to that of God: This nevertheless is an Eternal Truth, that will never change let Man do what he will: If he do not acknowledge the Dependance he has upon God in all Things, he shall never be saved; and if he do not take up the Counsels of the Gospel as the true Means taught by God for returning to this Dependance, he shall never be saved: For God reaches nothing that is usefess, but only Things precisely necessary, to which all the World ought to submit, This no Body does, for they believe Men more than God: Though the most part are Rul'd by the Devil, who gains the most part of Men to himself by the Means of these wild Shepherds, who abandon the Flock to the Power of the Infernal Wolf to destroy them with themselves for ever, taking them off from God to draw them to themselves. I have told you also, *That there are no longer any true Christians upon Earth:* that you may become one, and may not blindly suppose your self to be so: For there can be no Christians, but they who obey the Doctrine of Jesus Christ: All others are deceived in believing they are: For God does not change upon the Changes of Men: We are now as much obliged to depend upon God, as *Adam*, the First Man, was; and as much obliged to Labour the Ground as he, though we had committed no other Sin but what he did in us: We must also now follow the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, as the Primitive Christians did, because this Doctrine is immutable, and will never change: Therefore he who does not follow it is no true Christian, and cannot be saved without becoming so. No Body should flatter himself in this Matter. We must imitate Jesus Christ, or (t) perish

(t) *John.* 15. 6.

for ever : Because, both by the Will of *Adam* and by our own, we are all fallen into this Sin of Ingratitude, that we will not depend upon God : And therefore we have need to take up the Law of the Gospel, that we may return to a Dependance upon God, which is so just and reasonable. Though God had never demanded it of Man, he is bound both by Divine and Humane Right to render to God this Submission of his Will ; and he would certainly do it if he were not diverted from it by Men like himself : Because even Natural reason obliges him to depend upon him from whom he receives all Things. This, Humane Wisdom has diverted, having found out so many Reasons and Arguments to favour our Self-will, that all People believe they may lawfully follow it without offending him who has reserved it for himself. These, Sir, are *all blind who lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch (u)*. See that you never be of that Crew ; but believe in the Light that God manifests unto you. I have spoken TRUTH to you, not out of an Affectation to be believed or followed, but from a design and desire of your Salvation. All that I have said, is necessary for you, if you will use it well : Because we cannot Love God without knowing him, nor follow Vertue without conceiving what it is : In like manner we cannot avoid Delusion without discovering it, nor escape the Snares of the Devil without turning away from them. Make a good use of all these Things, and you shall be happy both in this World and the other. I doubt not but my way of speaking may be somewhat uneasy, to you, because it agrees not with your Philology, Theology, or other Scholastick Sciences : But believe me, I never professed any Humane Sciences : I choose rather to be ignorant of them than know them, and if I could learn in a Quarter of an Hour all the Learning of the Schools, I would not employ even that Little Time about them : Because I know that Humane Learning is a great Hindrance to the Holy Spirit : and also the Time is come that (x) *God will destroy the Wisdom of the Wise, and abolish the Prudence of the Prudent* : And therefore I cannot use fine Discourses, but such only as make the plain Truth be understood : Words and

(u) *Mat. 15. 14.* (x) *Isa. 29. 14.*

Terms may be contended about, but not the real Meaning, which is true. I will not dispute with the Learned, because God will overcome them very shortly by the Effects of my Words; nor will I polish my Language, because simple Plainness pleases God more than the greatest Eloquence, which is subject to Vanity: For he that speaks that he may talk well, is full of Vain-glory: Renouncing which, I seek nothing but plain Words that may exprels my Thoughts.

I believe, Sir, you have understood me well enough, and I can tell you no more whereby I may co operate to your Salvation: There remains nothing but to put it in practice. This you will do more easily in a Solitude, or Desert, than elsewhere, because of the Corruption of Men, who prove great Hindrances to us; and also because of the Power the Devil has now over their Minds, whereby he may infatuate all those who are yet sound and entire. Flee therefore, Sir, to avoid these Dangers, and be afraid lest you be diverted from your good Purpose, and do not look back (y) like Lot's Wife, who was changed into a Pillar of Salt. Yet a little Penitence, and then God will deliver you from it, to enter into the Joy that shall never end. This is what I wish you, and bid you. Adieu.

I was troubled to hear that she would leave me, entreating she would not withdraw from me, since I resolv'd to follow what she had taught me, which was nothing else but the denying of my self, and a dependance upon God.

She said: Sir, It will be more for your purity to stay alone: Because I am but a Creature as you are, and we must cleave to the Creatour only without Interruption: He will lead you at his pleasure, provided you be resigned to his Will; you need no more Instructions from any. I have told you abundantly what may bring you to an Union with God. To speak more would be henceforth but a Repetition of what is already said, which would rob us both of our Time, and that would be better employed in the Practice than in Repetitions. Leave me to my Liberty, and take also yours. God did not create us together, He will Save us though we be

separate in Body. True Union consists in a conformity of the Will with God, and not in particular Conferences. I must confess I have often withdrawn from conversing with God to speak to you of so many diverse Things: But I judg'd them necessary for your Salvation; and therefore they were not uneasie to me: But now that you know the Truth of many Things, it is not expedient to speak to you any longer. God will still teach you sufficiently, provided you continue faithful to him. He never denied what Men ask of him for their Salvation. You ought to have no other Designs. Let the (a) World be overturned; Let the *Roman* Church perish; Let the Elements be moved against Sinners; all this cannot touch you, provided you keep firmly united to God. Quit all Things willingly to find this Union. It matters little whether I am with you or not: Provided you be with God, He should suffice you: For he only can save you, and no Body else. There is always a Mixture when the Creature cleaves to its like. I often despised those who cleave to others, even though it was under some pious Pretext. I will not do my self what I despise in others.

I said to her, *She had promised to explain to me the 24th. Chapter of St. Matthew: That she ought at least, to give me it before she leave me.*

She said: Sir, I do not willingly fail in my Promise. Give me the Text of that Chapter, and I will explain it Word by Word; and I wish that all sincere Persons may see it, that they may discover that this Chapter speaks of the present Time. Every one reads it without understanding it: Nevertheless, there are fair Advertisements to beware of this dangerous Time in which we live at present. These are not Tales made at pleasure, but Truths come from the Mouth of Jesus Christ himself, which every one ought to Learn, and follow the Counsels that he gives: They are most saving, ~~as~~ for escaping (b) the Evils to come, which hang over our Heads. I must give it in Writing for an eternal Memorial, that it may be observed whether all that is contained in it shall not come to pass in our Time. Do not oppose what you shall find contrary to your Learning, or old Impressions, be-

(a) *Psal.* 46. 3, &c. (b) *Luke* 21. 36.

cause the Holy Spirit will give the perfect Understanding of all the Holy Scriptures, which has not been hitherto heard of: For we are fallen into the Fulness of Time. If you receive them with Humility of Heart, you shall understand all Things perfectly. But you must become an Infant, and cease from your own Wisdom: For God reveals (c) his Secrets to Babes, and hides them from the Great and Wise of the Earth. You must not control the Holy Spirit, or say, Such a Father explains this thus, or otherwise: Because Fulness is still more than a Portion. You will find what I shall say more clear than all that the Holy Fathers ever said: Because the Time is come of the Accomplishment of all Things: But you must simplify your Understanding as a little Child, else you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

I brought her the Text of the Gospel, promising entirely to submit my Understanding as much as was possible, that I might receive the Light of the Holy Spirit.

She said: Sir, This Submission is the Preparation required: For if you set up for the Doctor, or for the knowing Man you will oppose the Light of the Holy Spirit, the Source of all Wisdom. It must alwayes be believed and acknowledged, that he is wiser than all the Doctors that ever were in the World, and that we learn more by a small Ray of his Light, than by a Hundred Years of very assiduous Study. Therefore reckon all (d) your Learning Ignorance, and become (e) as a Child newly born again, that you may receive these new Notices, which will give you more Light than all the Fathers had together: Because they never discovered the hid Treasures (f); for the Time was not yet come. Every one spoke of it according to his Conceit, and not according to what it really was: For it was a Sealed (g) Book, that none was worthy to open but Jesus Christ himself after he was put to death and Crucified: To this very Time there is nothing in all the Holy Scripture fulfilled but this Death, which will make way for the Wonders of God, that have remained hid till now, and begin to be revealed to those who shall be humble in Heart: But the Wise (h) shall

(d) 1 Cor. 8. 2. (e) Matth. 18. 3. 1 Pet. 2. 2. (f) Mat. 13. 44. (g) Rev. 5. 1---9. (h) Isa. 29. 14.

perish with their Wisdom. Therefore, I exhort you, Sir, to Simplicity, and Submission, that you may be worthy to receive the Light which breaks forth in our Days, and to behold the (i) *New Jerusalem* descend from Heaven, adorned as a Bride in the Day of her Espousals. The Alliance (l) of God with Men will then be accomplished: The Earth will then be renewed. All Creatures will quit their Malignity, which shall be confined to the Center of the Earth (m) to torment the Bodies and Souls of all those who would not submit their Wills to God. They shall receive Pains and Anguish according to the Measure of their Sins, being overwhelmed with the Malignities which were caused by these Sins.

The Eighteenth Conference,

Speaks of Hell, and of the Damned, which shall be they who have followed their own Will, which is the cause of all Evil, and that few are disposed to quit it, that they may resign themselves to God, and receive the Divine Truth.

I asked her, *If all Men who will not submit their Will to God shall be confined to Hell?*

She said: Yes, Sir, assuredly they shall: None shall escape Hell (n) who have followed their own Will: And this most righteously: For God cannot save him who withdraws from him, and who with his full Reason, and the Consent of his Will, will independently follow his own Inclinations, as if he were Sovereign, and without a Creatour. We know well enough we cannot save our

(i) *Rev.* 21. 2. (l) *Ibid.* v. 3. (m) *Rev.* 20. 14, 15.
(n) *Isa.* 66. 3, 4.

selves, and that our Salvation depends upon God; and yet we hope to be saved, though we have quitted our Dependence upon God, and adhere to our selves! This is a false Perswasion which the Devil and the World set before us, to make us insensible of our Misery. For God will never save him (o) who will not depend upon him. If through Frailty we commit some Acts of Independance upon God, and afterwards repent of them, we may yet hope for Pardon: But when we see that all Men live and dye in following their own Wills, and will not leave it off, being readier to murmur against God than to yield up their Wills to him, he must of necessity render to them according to their Works. God made no (p) Malignity in the Elements, nor in any other Creatures, having created all good and perfect: But Sin (q) and the Self-will of Man has brought a Malignity into all Things: And therefore it belongs to him, as being the Work of his Hands: And if it be just to render to each one what belongs to him, it is necessary that Man have for his Portion (r) the Malignity of all the Creatures to all Eternity, as being the Works of (s) his Hands, that the Fire burn him, the Water swallow him up, the Wind bluster, the Earth be Thorns to prick him, the Dogs bite him, the Wolf devour him, the Lion tear him, the Serpent poyson him; and all the other Creatures shall spue out their Malignity upon Man, who brought it upon them, by forsaking his Dependance upon God.

I said to her, *That upon this Supposition, all shall be damned: Because none resign their Will to God, since every one enjoys it as much as is possible for them.*

She replied: Sir, I have told you long ago, that Paradise was shut; and that none did any longer enter into it: Because no Body resigns his Will to that of God. The Maxims of the Church have so blinded Mens Spirits by so many different wayes of Salvation, that none consider the Obligation that lies on them to resign their Wills to God. They think to be saved by going to Church, frequenting the Sacraments, &c. though nevertheless they follow their own Will in every Thing. This ruins all

(o) Psal. 73. 27. (p) Wisd. 1. 13, 14. (q) Rom. 5. 12.
(r) Psal. 11. 6. (s) Isa. 3. 10.

the World, and has caused the general Judgment: For God having beheld (t) all the Earth, found not one who was resigned to him, nor so much as one that did good: All having forsaken (u) God to follow their own Wills. And this general Evil has caused the general Sentence, which is irrevocable: Because there is Time no longer. If any desires to be converted, he must make haste: For the Last Times are near their End. They began when (x) Jesus Christ became Man, and by Grace have continued till now, to give Man a full Measure, and abundance of Time for his Conversion. Time is come to its End. Yet (y) a little Suffering, and the Judgment will end, and the Wicked shall go to the Abyss of all Evils (z), and the Converted to the Enjoyment of all Good, which shall never end, and that not only spiritual but also bodily and (a) material: For all the Creatures will render their Duty to Man, as soon as he shall pay his Duty to God. They were created to serve for the Delight of Man (b), as he was created to serve (c) for the Delight of God: And as soon as he shall be converted, and enter into a Dependence upon his God, (d) he shall experience that the Beasts and Elements shall submit also to the Will of Man: For for this they were all created: And if we see the Beasts and Elements rebel against Man, this is for no other reason but because he rebels against his God: For else all inferior Things would be entirely subject to Man, if he were entirely subject to God, even though it were in this Miserable Life. We have Examples of this in the Life of many Saints, who because they resigned their Wills to God, had in this Time of Penitence (g) the Power to command the Elements, and to be familiar with the Wild Beasts. One carried Fire without being burnt by it: Another stay'd the Sun (h): And several have tam'd Wild Beasts, and commanded the Wind and Tempests of the Sea, with so many other Wonders, playing with Serpents, and recreating themselves with Birds which assembled by the Command of some Servants of God. This

(t) *Psal.* 14. 2, 3. (u) *Psal.* 81. 12. (x) *1 Cor.* 10. 11. *1 John* 2. 18. (y) *Heb.* 10. 37. (z) *Matth.* 25. 46. (a) *1 Pet.* 3. 13. (b) *Gen.* 1. 26. (c) *Prov.* 8. 31. (d) *Isa.* 11. 6, &c. (g) *Heb.* 11. 34. (h) *Josh.* 10. 12.

is a certain Proof, that it is Sin only that gives all the Malignity to every Thing; and that nothing but the Rebellion that Man has rais'd against his God, renders all the Elements and other Creatures Rebels against him. If we would from this time yield up our Will into God's Hands, and submit our selves entirely to him, we should immediately find that all Things would subject themselves to us without any constraint. How greatly does Man wrong himself, when he will needs dispose of his own Will? He makes himself miserable in this World, and far more in that to come: Whereas by being willing to depend upon God, he has all under his Power, together with Eternal Bliss. What Infatuation of Spirit is it, that we will not do a Thing so good, so just, and so reasonable, as to resign our Will to that of God! If Men were taught this, as they are other frivolous Devotions, it would be impossible that any would deny God so profitable a Submission. But they let themselves be amused by the Discourses of Men, who propose a Salvation, without being able to give it. These are those false Christs and false Prophets of whom Jesus Christ has so often told, that we must (i) take heed of them, who have deceived all the World, so that none think any longer of resigning themselves to God, or of doing saving Penitence.

I said to her, *There were yet divers Persons who desired to be resigned to God, and also to do Penance, which cannot be avoided in this World.*

She said: Sir, You take the Bark often for the Wood: For those who say they will be resigned to God, have nothing but outward Words: For if they were truly so, they (k) would be governed by God; and would no longer labour for the Earth, but only for Heaven. Even the Labour that is necessary for the support of Life would be done only to fulfil their Penitence appointed by God. But when we see them aim at Places, Honours and Dignities; or Deal and Traffick to acquire Riches or Pleasures; that one would be a Priest, another a Religious; one build Cloysters, another Houses, as if he were to abide in them for ever: All these Things, with a Thou-

(i) *Matth.* 24. 4, 5. 11. 24. (k) *Psal.* 37. 5. 73. 23, 24.

and others, are infallible Evidences that God does not govern our Will: For he could not move us to make Tabernacles here, since he has sent us hither only to undergo a short Penitence. He could not incite us to build what must be so quickly destroyed. Neither Jesus Christ, nor his Apostles and Disciples built Temples or Houses, being contented with what was simply necessary. In which the Heathens will rise up against us in the Day of Judgment, who did so despise the shortness of this Life, that they would not build Houses, contenting themselves with a Tub to cover them from the Injuries of the Season. Others threw their Money into the Sea, not judging it necessary for so short a Life, though since that Time ours is much shortened. Neither can it be true that we are willing to do Penitence, because every one avoids Sufferings as much as he can; and to do saving Penitence, it must be voluntary, and suffered for fulfilling the Will of God: For else we may suffer much without Meriting, as Robbers and Thieves do.

I said to her, *That this ought to be preached through all the World: that they who would perish through Ignorance might hear the Truth and be converted.*

She said: Sir, You may do as you please: As for me I retire: For I am not sent to preach, but simply to declare the Truth, as I have done to you. You may have sufficiently remarked in all my Discourses, and my Life; if there were any Affectations or Passions which should move me to tell you these Things. I am persuaded in the sight of God, that I have no Self-Interest in it, nor any desire to please or displease Men, nor to affect the speaking new or marvellous Things. No, Sir, I am not led by that Spirit, but by that of Jesus Christ, who had such Compassion for Men; that for them he endured a bitter Passion and the Death of the Cross: If you preach these Things to Men of good Judgment, and who thirst after the Truth, they will gladly hear you, and yield themselves, and return to God: For they will easily see, that here is no Flattery for any Body; nor yet Contempt, or sensual Animosity; but pure solid Truths, which none can resist but they who are in League with Satan, and love Lyes, and resist the Truth. Those will very hardly receive Truths that are so opposite to them; they will induce effeminate Spirits to reject these Things as evil, perceiving that

that the knowledge of these will take from their Master the Devil the Power to deceive by Falshood and Hypocrisie; and that he will be forced very quickly to discover his Mischievous Reign (l): Because he shall not be able to catch Souls any longer under the colour of Piety and Holiness, as he has done hitherto. And his furious Reign shall be far less dangerous: For so soon as he shall be known for the Devil, no Body will follow him any longer, except they who wilfully yield up themselves to him: Whereas at present every one follows him blindly: But so soon as his Malice shall be discovered, he shall have no longer Power over Innocent Souls. Tell the Truth boldly, Sir, to all good Men in Confidence: But beware of the Adherents of the Enemy, and of those (m) who let themselves be governed by his Spirit, though they be not precisely in Covenant with the Devil: Because these will do you much Mischief when they think they are doing well: For they who have their Minds infatuated do serve the Devil as well as Sorcerers themselves: The one directly, and the other indirectly. You will still discover them by the resistance which they will make to the Truth, for they will not so much as hear it: Because they know very well they cannot change the Truth: They endeavour at least to reject and despise it, that no Body may receive it. This will be the Devils last Effort. For as soon as the Truth shall be known, it will strongly resist him, and at last will break his Head. Observe still, Sir, the Disposition of those to whom you would declare these Truths: And when you find opposition from them, leave off speaking to them: For those who shall be disposed to profit by the Truth, will give Ear to it willingly, and with Hungry Desires will search even to the Bottom; that they may discover the Essence of it; For no good Men can resist the Truth, nor the Things which are proposed to them, without having examined whether they be Good or Evil: But the Wicked will resist it, before they know it: And if they can catch a Word different from their School Terms, they will take it in a quite contrary Sense. Therefore, Sir, do not amuse your self with Questions and Disputes, For this would be to cast Roses before Swine:

(l) Rev. 12. 12, 17. 13. 3, 7, 8. (m) Mat. 10. 17.

Offer them only to those who will take pleasure to smell them, and not to these who will cast them into the Dung-hill. All good Men will feel in the Bottom of their Souls that this cannot come from the Devil : For he is the Father of Lyes ; and never incites to Self-denial, because he is too proud : Nor to the Love of God, because he hates him : And yet less to resign our Will to that of God, for he catches all Men by their Self-will. All my Discourses have for their Scope all that is contrary to the Devil, who is never contrary to himself.

The Ninteenth Conference,

Sheweth, That the Spirit of Antichrist hinders Men from discovering the saving Truth ; and that the Heathens are more resigned to God than the Christians at present.

I said to her, That I thought no Body in the World could resist so clear Truths, without betraying his own Conscience : That all the Things she had told me did speak forth themselves, and were attended with such solid Foundations and such firm Reasons, that the Learned and Unlearned might comprehend them, and that the Scope of all was the Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls ; and that there was nothing in them that savoured of the Earth.

She said : If we were not fallen into the Reign of Antichrist, no Body could resist so clear Truths. All the World would feel them, and would discover his Deceits ; every one would flie to the Desert to do Penitence, bewailing his past Life, and the Errours wherein he had lived for so long a time. But the Michief is, that this Antichrist has so great a number of Adherents who take up his Quarrel, and resist the Truth, that the good themselves have difficulty to receive it : For they distigure it, and make it pass for Lyes and Heresies, telling those who
advance

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advance it, that they would seduce the People, (n) as they said of Jesus Christ when he brought Light into the World, calling him *a Seducer (o) of the People*, or (p) *one that had a Devil*. The Power of Darknes is much encreast since the Time that he was upon Earth, and nothing is to be look'd for but (q) Outrages from all the Devil's Adherents. In this case a Man must count it a Happiness to suffer (r) Persecution for Righteousness sake, and believe that there is (s) no more blessed Death than to dye a Martyr for the Truth. But he must beware of Men (t), and use the Wisdom of the Serpent, and rather part with his Skin than lose his Soul. You will find more Welcome, Sir, among the *Jews* and *Heathens*, than among the *Catholicks*, who condemn others to Authorize their own Customs, despising the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, who sayes, (u) *Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned*. These *Catholicks* condemn all those who do not follow them: This is the cause why they are judged, and condemned first to be rooted out. They condemn so many holy *Heathens*, who will go before them (x) in the Day of Judgment, because they were faithful to God though they had not any Laws or Institutions to know Him: Nevertheless many resigned their Wills to that of God, and obeyed the Truth in their Lives; whereas these *Christians* follow Lyes, of which the Devil (y) is the Father; and none of them will resign themselves to God, nor take notice of the Truth which discovers the shortness of this miserable Life, and the certainty of one that shall be Eternal. These *Heathens* knew a God, to whom they resigned themselves; and seeing the Misery of this Life, they bewailed it; they laughed when they considered the Stupidity of Men who took pleasure in this Life; and judg'd, that they ought not to be called *Men*, because they did not use their Reason to discover the Truth of Things: For he who went through the City of *Athens* with his Lantern, seeking for a Man in the midst of so many Thousands as were in the Market-

(n) *Luke* 23. 2. (o) *Mat.* 27. 63. (p) *John* 8. 48.
 (q) *Matth.* 10. 25. (r) *Matth.* 5. 11. (s) *Rev.* 14. 13.
 (t) *Matth.* 10. 17. (u) *Matth.* 7. 1. (x) *Mat.* 8. 11, 12.
 (y) *John* 4. 44.

place, could not be ignorant that they who were about him were all Men : But seeing they were all occupied, in buying, and selling, and Trading for the Earth, he could not acknowledge them to be Reasonable Men : Because he who has Reason, ought to use it for his Eternal Happiness, else he is nothing but a Beast : For Reason only makes a Man ; without which he does not differ from the Brute Beasts, for they are unreasonable Animals, and Men are reasonable ones : Laying aside which, they are as much Brutes as the Beasts. This made the Philosopher search for a Man among so great a Number, and could not find one ; because all spent their Lives in Worldly Business, instead of employing them in the Study of the Knowledge of God, and of the Truth, which is the same God. And they condemn those Heathens as damned, and for my part I look upon them as SAINTS, and believe (y) they will come to Reign with Jesus Christ upon Earth to condemn the Christians, who besides the Light of the Heathens, had Lawes and Commandments from God, with the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, which obliged them to a farther Knowledge of God, and the Immortality of their Souls, the Shortness and Misery of this Life, that they might despise it, and the Vanity of perishing Goods, that they might abandon them. Nevertheless, not one of these Christians does any of these Things.

I asked her, *If it was indeed possible that not so much as one Christian should be resigned to God, nor have the Vertues of the Heathens ?*

She said : Yes, Sir : This is most true, that (z) not so much as one Christian is resigned to God, nor understands true Vertue, as much as the Heathens did : Because none apply themselves to it. Since they became Idolaters of Men, they have left off to know God, and abandoned themselves to the Will of their Idols, instead of the Will of God. They Preach and Teach through all Christendom, *That we must depend upon Men, whom they call the Fathers of the Church ; That we must believe and follow them, even with a blind Obedience :* In which they prefer themselves to God, who demands only of Man that he obey him in what he shall make known to him ; having

(y) Mat. 8. 4. Rom. 2. 10, 11. (z) Isa. 59. 16.

given him Eyes to discover this Beautiful Universe, (a) that when he sees the Heavens, the Earth, the Sun, the Stars, and all the Elements, with so many different Creatures so marvellous and so well ordered; he might clearly perceive that all those Things must proceed from a God: since Men and Nature can make nothing like them. Moreover, when Man considers himself he discovers evidently by his Understanding, that his Soul, his Memory, his Understanding cannot come but from a God, for no such Thing can come from Nature; no more than his Body, since all the Industry of Men is not capable to make so much as one Hair of our Head. This obliges us to acknowledge a God, by so many different Operations, without being put to know God blindly, no more than to love or follow him blindly; as these Christians say we must obey and follow Men blindly: For when we consider all the Works of God, and observe what he has done for us, it is impossible we should cease to love and follow such a Benefactor. If we had but the Light of a Heathen, we would not readily yield this blind Submission to Men: Because they are not our Creatours, nor our Saviours; and our Dependance ought to be upon the Lord who created all Things: But not on frail Man like our selves, who can give us nothing but Promises without Effects; for they deceive us when they promise us Salvation, since they cannot give it to themselves: And yet all the World believes they shall save all Christians, of whom I know not so much as one that is in the way of Salvation; because they neither know God, nor true Virtue; but have their Understandings blinded by the Discourses of Men, who desire to love, and be loved by their like; and instead of leading them to the knowledge of the true God to love and follow him, they draw them to love themselves: And by this blind conduct, every one runs to Perdition, while many believe that they are in the way of Salvation. So that I might well travel through all Christendom with a Lantern, to find out so much as one Man, as the Philosophers did through the City of Athens: Because no Body any longer uses his Reason, to see the Obligation that we have to depend upon the Will

(a) *Rom. i. 20.*

of God, nor yet to consider the Misery and Shortness of this Life, nor the Vanity of transitory Things; but are in all this as if they were void of Understanding, and follow one another blindly, without considering any other Thing: For if Man did only use his Reason, he would see clearly that he is obliged to depend upon his God, since he has received all from him, and can pretend to nothing but from him: His Natural Instinct does sufficiently encline him to this Dependence. Though they call this a *Heathen* Light, this is not that it is simply Natural, but it is an Impression that God makes on our Understanding, which leads us to know God, and to submit our selves to him: Which if we do, we are happy in whatsoever Nation we be: For God never demanded any other thing of Men but this Resignation to his Will; and if he has since appointed Laws; this was but by reason of Mens Frailty, having never formerly subjected them to any Laws but that of depending upon him: As he would not yet, provided we would submit to him. This our Christians do not, though they hope to be saved,

I said to her, *That it troubled me much to hear that not so much as one Christian was resigned to God.*

She said: Sir, That you may not believe this blindly, recal to mind a little the Persons whom you have held for good Men, and consider narrowly all their Behaviour, that you may see, whether they are not guided by their own Wills, even in their pious Works; whether they are not done from their own Inclinations? You will find that this has always been at the Helm to govern all; and that if it were not to please our selves, many good Works would be left undone. For my part, I have remarked this in all the Persons whom I have known; and I never knew but one Maid (d) who was resigned to God: Nevertheless, I have met with those who had the greatest Reputation for Vertue, and I alwayes perceived, that their Actions, though good, were mingled with Self-love: Which hinders a Resignation to God: For as long as our Self-will will bear Rule, God cannot have our Submission.

(b) *Psal.* 27. 8. *John* 1. 9. (c) *Acts* 10. 34, 35. (d) *This is She who wrote the Two Letters in the 42 Testimony of the Testimony of the Truth.*

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These are all dead Works, which shall be recompenced only in this World, and not at all in the other. I have seen Persons given to Fasting, Watching, and Prayer, diligent in going to Church, and in relieving the Poor, and yet notwithstanding of this they subjected not their Wills to that of God : But followed their own as much as they could, imagining that they did all for God, while there was no such thing. For if God had govern'd their Wills, they would have done all their Actions, both small and great, in the Righteousness, Goodness and Truth of God : From which they were very far estranged ; and if they had been capable of it, I would have made appear to them, that their best Actions were very blameable, and accompanied with Presumption, and Self-satisfaction. In this many deceive themselves, and believe they are in a State of Salvation, though they be very far from it. You must not be troubled, Sir, to hear it said, *That there is not so much as one Christian in the way of Salvation* : Since it is true, and none are resigned to God : But we ought to bewail their Blindness, and desire and pray that they may be converted for the Time to come, since there is Time for Repentance, and Leisure to return to God; even to the last Moment of our Life. If I should say that all Christians are in a State of Salvation, as all these false Prophets do, their Salvation would certainly be desperate : Because every one would rest on such a dangerous Estate. It were far better to tell the Truth, by declaring that they are not in the way of Salvation, that they may strive to recover it, than to flatter them with false Words : And it should be more acceptable to them to hear that they are not resigned to God, if it be most true, than to hear that dreadful Sentence, *(e) Go ye cursed into Everlasting Fire*, when they should have thought to hear, *Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom* : For it will be too late at Death to return to a Dependence upon God : And it is not so now. By which you may see, Sir, that there is more reason to be troubled when we hear them say, that Christians are in the way of Salvation, than when they say, they are in that of Damnation, when it is true, as it is, because of their Blindness : For if I

(e) *Matth.* 25. 41.

did not most evidently perceive this, I would not affirm such unpleasant Things. But I should be without Charity, if I should not declare so important Truths, while we are yet living in the Time of Penitence: For I perceive inwardly in my Soul, that the Thoughts, Words, and Actions of Men, are not at all directed by God: For they partake not of his Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth; but on the contrary, they are all full of Self-interest, Self-honour, or Pleasures: And notwithstanding, no Body will willingly be reprov'd: Every one desires to continue as he is, without knowing his Fault, and much less amending it; covering and palliating his Miseries, and excusing them as much as he can. So that I see no good that can be done for the Conversion of Christians; for they trust too much to the false Persuasion of their Salvation. Therefore, I will retire, and bid you Adieu. Not that I am displeased to be among Men, to whom I am like; but it is because I perceive them to be Enemies of God, and they do not desire to know it. With which my Heart is very much oppress'd.

The Twentieth Conference,

Shews, That there are very few among the Christians who desire to be converted unto God, and to return to a Dependance upon him: And treats of the necessity of this Dependance.

I asked her, If she did not fear that she should Act against Charity to her Neighbour, by retiring thus from their Conversation; since she might do them great good.

She said: No Sir, I Act not against Charity to my Neighbour: Because I cannot help him, if he will not have Help. I have had but too much Experience of this, that Men will not change their Life, at least the Christians:
For

For I was never acquainted with others, to know if they are as much hardned as those who are called Christians: For those, I say, I have done all that could be done to shew them the dangerous State in which they live; but I profited very little by it. They love rather to see and hear fine Things: But for resigning themselves to God, no Body will do it but by Word, which is as far from the Truth as is Heaven from Hell. Every one says, that he will be resigned to God; while in the mean time, no Body will deny his own Will in the least thing; we hear them often say, *I will what God wills*; And the least Contradiction they meet with, does alarm them; and those who promise them Salvation, comfort them, and flatter them, saying, *That this is to be patient, when they murmur not against the Appointments of God, and that they must only resign themselves, and thereby they shall merit much*: As if God were obliged to Recompence their Impatience. For to suffer Contradictions, is common and necessary, both to the Wicked and to the Good: Because no Body can be free of them in this miserable World, where every one must suffer, will he; nill he: But to say that we are resigned to God, when we are only resigned by force, is a Lie; because this resignation is a necessary thing, when we cannot hinder things to fall out against our Will. For to be resigned to God, we must have no more Self-will, to will this and not to will that: For a Thing that we have resigned, we do not hold nor possess it any longer to desire to use it. Resignation to God, is a total dependance upon his Disposal, as well for our Soul as for our Body, and for all that concerns us, bridling our own Will in every Thing, without willing or desiring any thing any longer, knowing well that Gods Conduct is always more perfect, than all that we could wish for. If it rain, if it be fair, if it be hot, or cold, if we are in Peace, or War, in Adversity or Prosperity, it matters little, provided we be resigned to God: It is he who governs all these Things, and can never do evil. If our Friends live or dye, what the matter, when God ordains it? Our Life, our Death, must not be wiht for nor desired by us, because we are not capable enough to judge what is good or evil for us: And to offer to give Laws to God, is to mock him, since he understands and knows all Things: He sees far better than we what is good and perfect, because he is the

I
Wisdom

Wisdom that cannot be ignorant of any thing, and the Goodness that can do no evil, and who orders all Things to a good End, so that if we were not void of Understanding, we would not entertain a Thought of contradicting any Thing that befalls us: For all turns to good to him (g) who is resigned to God; and though we esteem it a Happiness to have good Desires, yet it is a Thing infinitely more perfect to have no Desires, (h) with a Dependance upon God: Because a never so little mixture with this Dependance alwayes hinders the Effect of the Ordinances of God, as if we would be Tutors to him, or give out our Law for doing well. In the mean time we are so short sighted, that we do not discern Good from Evil: So that if God should permit that to befall us which we often ask and desire of him as Good, great Mischiefs would have come upon us, so blind are we in the matter of our Salvation. And yet we will not resign our Will to that of God but in Word only: So that if I should tell Christians now adays, that they will never be saved without resigning their Wills to that of God, they would say, that I damn all the World: For they look on the Salvation and Damnation of Men, as if they could Damn and Save them, whereas it is God only that can Save, and Sin only that can Damn. Therefore by conversing with Men I will not profit them for their Salvation.

I said to her, *That God having imparted to her such Light, it ought not to remain under a Bushel: But should be set in a Candlestick.*

She said: Sir, What will it avail to set the Light upon a Candlestick, when those who are present will shut their Eyes that they may not see it? These Christians are so pre-occupied with their own way of Devotions, and with seeming Vertues, that they esteem nothing else; and as soon as they shall see the Brightness of this Light, their Eyes will be dazled with it, and they will even complain of the Light of it. How is it possible to shew to any that which he will not see? I have conversed among others with the most pious of the Religious, who could not imagine that there was another way of Salvation, but a

(f) Psal. 131. 2. (g) Rom. 8. 28. (h) Psal. 131. 2.

good observance of their Rules; and they thought they did a thing well-pleasing to God, to maintain the Honour and Profit of their Order; and for my part, I judge this to be so far from a Dependance upon God, that I think it is the real Mean to take them off from it: For as long as we are tied to Rules, and Studies to observe them well, it is alwayes the Person that Acts; and the Care of preserving the Honour and Profit of the Order, is indirectly the seeking their own Honour and Profit: Which is not only a Vice, but also a false Vertue that deceives them to their Ruine; and though I assure these Persons that there is no other way of Salvation but that of resigning their Will to God, yet they will not hear this Note, insisting alwayes on the first Tune they learned; and they think they are resigned to God, since they have quit the World to enter into a Religious Order, and they apply themselves to the observing of their Rules, they say their Offices, and obey their Superiours, choosing rather to resign themselves to Men their Equals, than to their God, imagining that he is served with Reverences, Bowings of the Knee, and a great many common Prayers: Without remembering that, 'tis he who (i) searches the Reins, and examines the Conscience; and that all these outward Things are nothing but Grimaces when they are not done from an abundance of inward Sentiments; and that it is said to such Persons, (k) *This People worship me with their Lips, and their Heart is far from me.* All Christendom is full of this Blindness, and they believe that God is served by outward Things: Nevertheless it is a certain Truth, That (l) God has no need of material Things, but desires only (m) the consent of our Will to take his pleasure in us: Which he cannot do so long as we will take our pleasure with the Creatures, or with any Earthly Things, even though according to our Opinion they should be good Things: Because he is jealous of our Heart, and will not suffer a Corrivall; and he has reason: For it appertains to him alone: Because he created it without the Interposition of any other. Notwithstanding, Man is so unthankful that he denies him his Heart and his Will, and would content him with Words and

(i) Jer. 17. 10. (k) Isa. 29. 1, 3. (l) Acts 17. 25.
(m) Prov. 23. 26.

outward Gestures, and will not open his Eyes to discover the Truths which would save him from Damnation. My Heart is oppressed with Grief, Sir, to see all the World perish, and I cannot help it, because they will not receive the Truth. I am very far from desiring to leave my Neighbour out of disdain: But I am obliged to leave him because he will not be converted to the Truth, and the Holy Spirit sayes, We ought not to speak that which does not profit. I see the Vice of all Men clear as the Sun, and I do not think that one can be saved in the State in which they are at present: And yet I cannot save them by my Conversation: Because they make not a good use of it. If I declare their Vices in particular, they are ill satisfied, or at least, they would cover and excuse them: Which is evidence enough that they will not amend them; and if I point out the Vices indirectly, or in general, then no Body will take it to himself, but will excuse himself by some Formality or Reasoning; and if any one lay them to Heart for a Time, Men and Business do quickly banish these good Purposes: And so nothing is put in practice: My Time is lost: And my Words are rendered useless, whereas I would be profiting something in conversing with God. Behold these are the Causes and Reasons why I will remain alone, not to conceal the Light: For I would have it Lighted for all the World, and I know not a more perfect Contentment in this Life, than the Meeting and Society of many Hearts united in Jesus Christ; as also I know nothing more uneasy than the Conjunction of Persons of contrary Wills: For I cannot change for them, and they will not change to follow me. This is the Combat.

I said to her, *That at least some would change to follow her, and to save their Souls.*

She said: Sir, You would be greatly astonished to see the way the World would take to change. Every one, forsooth, would resign his Will to God, provided he govern it according to their own Inclinations. God must accommodate himself to them, and they will not accommodate themselves to God. Even so, many would indeed follow me, if so be withal they may follow also their own Will. Which cannot be done: For he who follows it, (n)

is the Enemy of God, and if I am his Friend, how could I dwell with those who are his Enemies without a continual Constraint, Contradiction and Debate? All their Actions proceeding from this Self-love would be blameable. If I do not reprove them, I am unfaithful to God; and if I reprove them, I become their Enemy; and withal they will not amend, but will become rather worse, applying themselves to remark if they can find any defects in my Actions for a Revenge; and if they do not find any, they will endeavour at least to despise my Intentions by measuring them according to their Line, and interpreting them according to their Sentiments. And thus they will offend God, and trouble my Repose without any profit. Therefore I foreseeing this, would do very ill to associate with any Body, unless I had assurance before-hand that they would resign themselves truly to God: For else this would be to render my self a Slave, and others miserable, without any Contentment: And as God takes his delight and pleasure with Souls whose Wills are united to his, so he thrusts behind him those who are not in the Unity of his Divine Will; even so ought I to thrust away from me those who will not truly resign their Wills to that of God; because it is a kind of Martyrdom to live together bodily being divided in Will: As it would be a Paradise of Delights to live with Persons who have their Wills equally resigned to that of God. Which makes the true Paradise and perfect Contentment: For God (o) and these Souls would be but one and the same Thing.

I said to her, *That she ought to associate her self with sincere Persons; and that her Company would be of great Advantage to them for attaining to this Resignation to God.*

She said: It is true, Sir, in case their Will were truly good: But all that I remark in these Persons who would follow me and be saved, is nothing but *Wouldings*, not *absolute Wills*. They say, they would be converted, they would follow me, and be resigned to God; while in effect they do neither the one nor the other before God: Because these *Wouldings* proceed only from their own Will. They would be converted, being afraid of Damnation;

they would follow me that they may be saved; and resign themselves to God only in Word; or as long as the Will of God goes along with theirs. Let this is the good Will that I have experienced in those who would follow me, and even at present I know no other: For I perceive very often that they aim yet at their own Interest, Honour, or Pleasures. So that if they were with me, I would reprove all their Actions, none excepted: Which would be very irksome to me, and troublesome to them, yea even insupportable. For so long as they are not truly resigned to God, they live still according to their Natural Senses, which will not suffer Reproofs; and Nature is so Proud, that it will not acknowledge its Fault, nor suffer dislike, presuming to be more wise and accomplished than its equals; so that all that I should do to these Persons, would only be to disquiet and vex them, because they are so in love with their Vices and Imperfections, that they even despise those that do not follow them. So that I should live in a continual Constraint among others, for I could not speak according to my Sentiments: For they are not capable of them; and I could not shew them their Faults, because they presume to be as wise as I, neither could I be profitable in their Company, when they will not follow the Spirit that guides me, but every one bounds in their own Sense, and will not submit themselves to the Truth, without which Submission no Body can attain to this Resignation. The necessity of this Dependence must be known, or else they will not subject themselves to it: For if they see not the necessity of doing this, every one will believe he is in a State of Salvation in whatsoever Condition he be; and thus every one will insensibly perish; and my Company could not save them; And since God has given me Liberty, wherefore should I continue a Slave to Men, when I cannot be profitable to them for the Glory of God?

I said to her, That God was pleased to undergo the Slavery of our humane Nature for the Salvation of his Creatures, and that she ought to be furnished with the same Spirit that Jesus Christ had.

She said: Sir, By his Grace I am so, and I do so earnestly desire to see all Men saved, that I would willingly dye for every one of them, if I had as many Lives; But I am well assured that my Conversation, my Words, and my Life,

Life cannot save them if they do not resign themselves of their own free Will to the Will of God. Though all the (p) Saints, both Angels and Men pray together, they will never procure the Salvation of so much as one Soul, unless it resign its Will to God. For this is a necessary Thing: The Saints may indeed pray, and the Angels sollicit, and all Men help any who has withdrawn from God to obtain this Dependence upon him; But all this will avail him nothing if he do not of his own Free-will truly yield up his Will to God, and deny his Self-will. Very few comprehend this: Nevertheless, this is an Eternal Truth that will never change: For God created Man only for this.

I said to her, *That I my self did not well comprehend this Necessity of Depending upon God; entreating that she would explain it to me.*

She said: Sir, Be attentive, and consider my Discourse well: Perhaps it will give you some Light in this Matter. Consider first that God said, (q) Let us make Man after our Image and Likeness: This was not said in vain, but it had its full effect, and Man (r) was made after the Image and Likeness of God. Consider a little, Sir, wherein you shall find the Likeness of God in Man? It is not in his Natural Body: For God is a pure Spirit; and has nothing that resembles a Body: Neither can this Likeness to God, be found in the Animal Soul of Man; because this Animal Soul has no more than the Beasts, so far is it from resembling God; for it extends no farther than to give Life to the Body for a certain Time; whereas the Life of God is Eternal, without Beginning, and without End; and a Temporal Thing cannot resemble an Eternal. Therefore this Likeness of Man to God, cannot be found in the Animal Soul of Man, no more than in his Body: And if one would seek for it in the Faculties of the Soul, which are the Memory, the Understanding, the Will, we shall find that these Three Faculties have no resemblance to God: For they are imperfect and limited: Which God cannot be: Our Memory is very frail, and sometimes does not remember on the Morrow what we did the preceding

(p) Jer. 14. 11. & 15. 1. (q) Gen. 1. 26. (r) Gen. 1. 27.

Day: Our Understanding is, in like manner subject to great defects, taking False Things often for True: And our Will is sometimes so insolent, that if it were not bridled by Reason, it would often precipitate us into irreparable Mischeifs. All which Things are in nothing like to God, since he is without any Imperfections or Defects, perfect in all Things, and without Bounds or Limits, whereas the Faculties of our Soul are all limited, as the Faculties of the Souls of Beasts are, who have sometimes a better Memory than Men: For if a Dog or a Horse be ill used in any Place, he will remember it for a long time; They have also a Will, to do, and to leave what they are naturally enclined to, though it be bounded and limited as well as that of Man; for neither the one nor the other can put their Will in Execution, because they have not the power to do all that they can desire: Which God can do in all Things. By which we see that Man is not in any of these Things like to God: For his Understanding is not capable of comprehending any thing but what he sees, or hears, as are the Beasts also. So that by the Faculties of the Soul of Man we cannot perceive that he is like to God, since he has an Eternal Memory, an unlimited Understanding, and an unchangeable Will: To which the Faculties of the Souls of Men are not at all to be compared. Wherein then can it be said that God has made Man like to himself? Search into it with me, Sir: You will find that he is like to God in nothing, but in his Free-will: And as God has this Free Power over all Things, so he gave to Man this Free Power over his own Will, that he might dispose of it as it should please him; in this alone, he is the Image of God: Because this Liberty is to him Eternal and Independent: As God is Sovereign, independent from all Things; So Man is Sovereign of his own Free-will, independent from all Things, except that he acknowledge that this Liberty is given him of God, that he neither has nor holds it of himself: As God has and holds all Things of himself: Otherwise, Man is a Deity by his Free-will, for by it he can do and leave any thing: For God (s) never retakes what he has once given, neither will he ever retake the Free-will of Man; but will let them enjoy it to all Eternity, as being an Eternal Gift:

It will never end as long as God shall be God : Man shall have his free Will, both during this Life, and also in the other in Paradise or Hell. He shall have through all this Divine Quality of a Free-will which God gave him when he created him. He shall not take it from him in Paradise ; because this is the only quality that Man has, whereby he is capable of being united to God, all the rest being only bounded and natural, are not at all capable of approaching a supream Deity.

The One and Twentieth Conference,

Speaks of the Free-will of Man ; in which alone he is like to God : That God has given it to Man for ever : That he has annexed to it all his future Graces : And that never any Good nor any Evil will befall any Body, in Time or in Eternity, but by Free-will, according as we shall yield it up or not, to a Dependence upon and Resignation to God.

I said to her, That we had been taught, That Man had indeed Free-will when he was created : But that by Sin it was so lost, that he could not use it any longer to do good.

She said : Sir, Free-will shall never be diminished, but will continue alwayes such as it was given to the first Man in his Creation : For God can never repent of the Works (t) that he has made. If Man feel that he is unable to do good, this is not the defect of his Free-will, which remains to him still entire ; but the defect is, that his Sins have taken from him the power to do good, by (u) the Blindness they have brought into his Soul, which hinders the Discovery of the Means how to depart from evil and to do good. The Soul being blinded by its Sin, lost the Light of Truth ; and in this darkness cannot find the way

to return to good. This she attributes to the Weakness of her Free-will, flattering her self to excuse her own Wickedness, or indirectly to accuse God that he does not give her sufficient Grace to do well. Which is a great Calumny against God, who never bestowed so many Graces upon any Creature as he did on Man, having made him alone a depending Spirit, because he would have one kind of Creature with whom he might take his delight (u): Therefore he endued him with this Divine Liberty, that his Delight might be compleat on the side of both the Lovers. This is not a small Grace which would be sufficient to enable a Man to do well. For if all Men whatsoever would return to a Dependence upon God, they would certainly recover the same Grace and Liberty that Adam had before his Sin: Because God continues still in the same Will to take his Delight with Men, that he had when he created them; Because he never (x) changes: For he is immutable. And if Man do well, or ill, it is for himself; but God will never deny his Graces, because he is alwayes good, tho' Man be wicked.

I admired this Discourse, That God would grant to any Man whatsoever the same Graces that he gave to Adam in his Creation, provided he resigned his Will to that of God, asking her how this was possible since the Curse of Sin?

She said: Sir, It ought not to be doubted. He is the same God, and we are the same Creatures, come from Adam, and reputed as if we were he. If of our own free choice (y) we would yield up the Free-will that God has given us in our power, he would at the same instant put us again in the state of Innocence, and would govern us till we departed again from a Dependence on him: In which we would still be free: Because God never keeps any Body by force, letting our Free-will still Act as to good or evil, as we will dispose of it. For if God did Act upon us independently from our Will, he would certainly save all Men, and would not permit so much as one to be damned: Because he created (a) them all for Salvation, and he will never take from any Body the Graces which he gave to

(u) Prov. 8. 31. (x) Jam. 1. 17. (y) Isa. 58. 13, 14.
(z) John 6. 67. (a) 4 Esdr. 8. 59, 60.

Adam. If they abuse them it will be their Unhappiness, and their own Fault, and not that of Grace: For it shall still be (b) given to the good and to the wicked, even to the last Day of Judgment: God will alwayes be with Men by his Grace. But then the season of Grace shall be past: Therefore will he say to the wicked, (c) *Go ye Cursed, depart from me.* If he had not been with them till then, he could not have thrust them away from him, since they would have been so from the Time they became wicked. God should have no occasion to have thrust them from him this Last Day, if they had been separated from his Grace during all the time they lived in their Sins. It is said indeed, that the Grace of God is lost by sinning: Nor that this Grace is taken from Man on Gods part; but only that Man, of his Free-will, will not subject himself to God; but will be at his own disposal. And by this Mean, he falls into all sort of Evils, from which he should be delivered, if he would yield up to God this Free-will, repenting that he himself had used it. If you please, Sir, to look into the Lives of the Saints, you will find that many of them walked on the Waters, went over burning Coals, for an Evidence, that God gives to those who resign themselves to his Will the same Graces he gave to *Adam* when he created him; and that the Elements render their Duty to Man, when he renders his Duty to God; that the Fire only enlightens and warms him, without blackening or burning him. Because the Malignity that is in those Elements, as in other Things, did never cleave to them, till Man would no longer acknowledge a DEPENDANCE upon God. All the Elements, with the other Creatures subjected to Man, were obliged by Right of Justice, to quit also the Dependance they had upon Man, since he had quitted the Dependance that he had upon his God, and not to submit themselves any longer to Man but by force, since he would not submit but by force unto God. Which is a brutish Obedience: Though these new Casuists call the Resignation in some Sufferings which befall Man, Vertue and Merit: In which there can be no more Merit, than the giving Oats to Horses when they have rid well by Prick of Spur: So the Man who has no

(b) Prov. 1. 20--33. (c) Mat. 25. 41.

other Vertue but to resign his Will to that of God when he cannot escape Sufferings: and is forced to fall into some Misfortune, can merit no other thing but the Temporal Repose and Quiet which his Resignation will give him: Because it does not proceed from this that he will depend upon God, but from the necessity he is in to suffer them by force. The Spirits of Men are strangely blinded now; for they bring so many Means to cleave to God, that they know not which to pitch upon as the best. One sayes, the Churches and Sacraments must be frequented; and another, that the Body must be mortified; another bids subject the Will to some Man, or enter into a Religious Order; and a Thousand other such Things: Nevertheless, there is but one Thing only necessary, which is, to Resign **OUR WILL** to **THAT OF GOD**: By which we have fulfilled all; For God having the disposal of our Will, (d) he will guide it in all that is most perfect and accomplished.

I asked her, *If God could not lead our Will in things that are good without our delivering up our selves to him, since all belongs to him, and all good comes immediately from him?*

She said: It is true, Sir, all good comes from God; and there can be no other good but he. All the (e) good that Men can do, must come from him; but know this, that since the first Graces which he gave Man in creating him, he will give him no other (f) but as far as Man of his Free will shall depend upon his God, and no farther. It he will wholly depend upon him, he shall have Graces in abundance; and if he will only in part depend upon God, he shall still have Graces in part in proportion to his Dependance. For Example: One will depend upon God as to his Health; and assuredly he will suffer his Infirmities and Diseases with Patience: Which will be the Grace he has merited by yielding up his Will to God as to his Health: Another will submit to God as to Temporal Goods; and he shall have the Grace of Poverty of Spirit: Another will submit to God in the Matter of his Honour; and he shall have the Grace to suffer Contempt willing: And so of the rest. Since God gave the first Graces to

(d) *Psal.* 73. 23, 24. (e) *Jam.* 1. 17. (f) *Isa.* 1. 19.

Adam, he will not encrease them to him but so far as his Free-will shall be subjected to God, and no farther : Because he has shewn the effect of his Goodness and Almighty Power towards Man in creating him so full of Graces and Prerogatives, taking him out of *Nothing*, where he could have merited nothing. God having absolute Dominion over this *Nothing*, bestows on him all the Graces that he pleased, because he found no resistance ; and so he lead his Will to good, having engraven in his Soul a good Inclination, and a reasonable Understanding to know the Dependance he had upon God, from whom he saw he had received Being, and all Things. An Instinct to good, and the Love of his God, were engraven in the Marrow of his Bones, These are the Qualities that God gave Man before he was capable of resisting God : But since he resisted so many Graces, and would retake to himself the Free-will that God had given him, to use it independently from God, he has lost his Graces, and obliged him not to bestow more upon him, but as far as he will yield up his own Will to God, having by this Mean bounded the Grace of God at his Will. Not that Man is capable of regulating or bounding the Graces of God, who is still absolute Sovereign of all Things ; but because it was his absolute Desire to give to Man his Free-will (*b*), which alone renders him capable of being united to God : And if he had received only a Limited Will, he would have had no Divine Quality for God to take his Delight with him : For that Two Things may find Contentment together, there must still be a Proportion or Sympathy between them. A Horse cannot be contented or pleased with a piece of Iron ; nor a Dog with Marble, nor a Swine with a Precious Stone : Because all these Things are disproportioned to the Nature of these Beasts, who cannot Love nor take Pleasure in Objects so unlike their Natures. Even so God cannot take his Delight with any Creature of a bounded Will, he being an infinite God, There must be in Man some infinite Quality by which he may unite himself to God : And if he had not given him this Will eternally Free, Man should have had nothing in him sympathetic with God, who nevertheless would make a

(g) *Deut.* 30. 14. (*b*) *Psal.* 110. 3.

Creature with whom he might take (i) his pleasure : Therefore he gave him this Divine and Reasonable Soul with (k) an Eternal (l) Liberty, which shall never be taken from him, do Man what he pleases : Because God never changes his Decrees (m) ; and if he forced Man to good after he had given him this Liberty, he should constrain that which he would have to be free, and should reverse the Order that he had so wisely Established, and should take from Man the most Precious Thing he had received : For laying aside this Free-will, he would be but like the Beasts. Therefore God will never direct our Will, but when we shall yield it up to him : though he be Almighty.

I entreated her to tell me, How our Will shall be eternal ; and if we shall even be free to do evil in Paradise, or good in Hell ?

She said : No, Sir, we can never do evil in Paradise : Because there we shall enjoy the continual Presence of God ; during which we can never sin, though it were even in this Miserable Life : As long as our Soul abides there in the Presence of God, it can no more sin than if it had no Liberty : And if some Saints have fallen into Sins, this has certainly been when they have strayed from this Presence of God ; and during this wandering, they might sin : Because the Objects of Evil were yet present with them, and they resting on them, might easily fall. But in Paradise our Spirit can no more wander, or be distracted from God ; because he shall be continually and eternally with us, sensibly and visibly, without any interruption ; neither can we be diverted by evil Objects, because all that shall be in Paradise shall be holy ; and all the Blessed shall visibly and sensibly possess God, so that we shall see God in every one of them. All these Things will render us impeccable ; and though we shall still have Free-will, yet it shall never be led to evil in the midst of such Good ; and God to whom we shall entirely yield it up, will straitly (o) unite it to his own, so that it can no more be led to evil than that of God is, for it shall be

(i) Prov. 8. 31. (k) Rom. 11. 29. (l) Eccl. 15. 14---17. (m) Jam. 1. 17. (n) Psal. 16. 8. (o) John 17. 21, 23.

united to his in so indissoluble a Bond of Love that it will be impossible to separate it for so much as one Moment, they being no longer but one and the same Thing. Thus shall our Free-will rule in Paradise. Even so in Hell our Will shall never be bounded; because God having given it free, it shall eternally persist in its Liberty: But whereas this Will would not submit to God in this Life, but was led to evil of our own Will, and since Death, remains in the same desire of doing evil; we continue in these desires to all Eternity, without ever having the Will to do good: Because we are farther removed than ever from all sorts of good Objects, but joyned and attended with all sorts evils. The continual Presence of Devils prompts our Wills continually and without intermission to do Evil; and the Company of so great a number of damned Souls who use their Free-will to do all manner of evil, doth continually draw us to imitate and follow them: So that having never any thought towards good, we can never have the Will to do good, even as the Devils cannot, who have also retained their Free-will, which serves continually to encrease their Evils, their Will being engaged to persist in doing all the evil they can: For this cause they tempt Men so strongly that they may have them in their damnable Company: Not that they hope the number of the Damned will ease their Pains, on the contrary, they well know, that it will encrease them the more; but because their Free-will is bent to evil; and this Free-will being eternal, is eternally bent to do evil: For a free Quality, such as Free-will is, will always act in good or evil; according to the Object towards which it bends. And their Evils are so far from being bounded by Damnation that they encrease eternally; because of their eternal Will, which cannot be bounded. This Free-will which is bent to evil, has given a Malignity to all the Creatures, which Malignity shall remain also (p) eternally: Because this Malignant Free-will, being a Divine and Eternal Quality, of necessity makes its Works eternal: So that these miserable Souls shall have upon them all the Malignity of all the Creatures to all Eternity, as being the Work of their Hands.

(p) *Mat.* 25. 46.

I asked her, *If the Devils had also their Free-will, and if God could not bound them?*

She said: Yes, Sir, the Devils shall have their Free-will to all Eternity as well as Men: For God (g) never retracts what he has once given. The Angels were intelligent Beings capable of being united to God, which Capacity could not be given them but by a Divine Quality, which is that Eternal Liberty, without which they could not have Sympathy with God: For Angels as well as Men are but simple Creatures, who can have no proportion with their Creator: Therefore he has given both to the one and the other of these Creatures a Divine Soul and an Eternal Free-will, that by these Divine Qualities, they might have a Capacity of Loving an Eternal God. Now the wretched Inclination of this Free-will resisting the Designs that God had in blessing them so advantageously with Divine Gifts, would needs use this Liberty to apply it to the doing evil instead of following the good for which this Liberty was given them. Notwithstanding, God will never retake those Divine Qualities that he has once given them: The Divine Soul, and Eternal Liberty, will never end: For all that is Divine is Eternal; and God cannot bound them, because he cannot be changeable in his Gifts, nor can he take away what he has been pleased to give. If it be Etablished among Men to lay no longer claim to a Thing given, how much more ought we to hold that God lays no claim to the Free-will of Devils and Men, to whom he voluntarily gave it. This Gift only makes the Souls of Men and also those of Devils to be immortal: For otherwise both the one and the other would have been reduced to nothing as soon as they sinned; for God being the Source of all good, can never do evil, nor give eternal Pains: But the great Blessings which he gave his Creatures in giving them a Divine Soul and Free-will, have served the Devil for his Eternal Milery, as they will do to wicked Men, who if they will apply this Divine Liberty to do Evil, they shall bring upon themselves all the evil they shall do, which will be eternal, as proceeding from their eternal Will. If Man had had only an Animal Soul, and a Limited Will, their Evils would have ended with themselves, as those of the Beasts do, who do evil or good by their

(g) *Rom.* 11. 29.

bounded Will, and all their Works, such as they are, do end with their Animal Soul, which is nothing but transient and temporal. If Men had not a Divine Soul and an Eternal Will, they would wholly do the same: For they are not in Qualities different from the Beasts, except by their Divine Qualities, which render them Immortal and Eternal: For since God established them in a Divine Soul and Will, they can never end, being Eternities, as God, except that they had a Beginning, and God was incomprehensibly without Beginning, and to all Eternity.

I asked her, *If the Souls of the Blessed in Paradise, could do as much good as they would; and in like manner, if the Souls of Devils and of the Damned, could do as much evil as they would?*

She said: Yes, Sir. For their Wills have no Bounds, neither the one nor the other. Have you never heard say, that in Paradise there are infinite Goods? That is to say, That those Free-wills which are in Paradise will never cease to do good, even infinitely: For there can be no Barenness with God; but a production of continual Goods, which shall never have an end: Thus the Blessed shall produce all the Good that their Free-will shall desire. And in like manner the Wills of Devils and Damned Men shall produce as much Evil as their Free-will shall desire. They shall not be able to do evil according to their Wills to the Men yet Living on the Earth; much less to the Blessed in Heaven: Because these can resist them by their Free-will, which is inclined to good: The Free-will of the Good having as much power to do well, as the Free-will of the Wicked to do evil. They are both free to do in themselves all the good and evil that they will; but the Evil cannot take hold of the good Wills of others no more than the good of the Good can profit the Wicked: and the evil of the Wicked cannot hurt the Good; but in so far as both the one and the other give the Consent of their Free-will: Which indeed may be done during this Life: Because Man is yet in an uncertain State of Salvation or Damnation; and even to his Last Breath his Will may be led to good and to evil. Therefore it is said, that (r) the least in Paradise is greater than the most

holy among Men; because of the uncertainty of their Blessedness; they being still in danger of consenting to the evil Suggestion of the Devil, or the Example of some wicked Man, being here alwayes in peril, for we are still encompassed with our (s) Enemies, who do all the evil they please by their Free-will: But we may also resist it by ours: For neither Devils nor any wicked Men who-so-ever can ever have power over our Free-will: For it will still be left free to us, and we may consent to or reject the Temptations of the Devil and wicked Men, they not being able to hurt us without our Consent. We cannot hinder them to tempt us, since they have their Liberty, and they cannot hinder us to resist them, for we in like manner have our Free-will. But the Souls of Devils and the Damned do certainly as much evil as they can, because they have let pass all occasions of doing good, and cannot now have any good Will, for they have destin'd it to evil: But the Souls of the Blessed cannot be molested by the Devils and wicked Men: For their Will is absolutely destinated to good, which destination is an opposition to all sort of Evil. So that the (r) good of the Blessed cannot touch the evils of the Miserable, nor these on the other hand the goods of the Blessed: For every one has made a choice of good and evil for Eternity; and cannot repent of it, since they are passed out of this World. For in whatsoever (u) State Man shall dye, he shall abide in it: If he dye in the eternal Resolution of good, he shall do good to all Eternity; and if he dye in the Resolution of doing evil, he shall do evil to all Eternity. And he must look for no other Sentence but what he has made up for himself by his own Free-will.

I said to her, That many holy Persons were sometimes abused by Devils and wicked Men, though they had not contributed to Evil by their Free-will: And it is ordinarily said, that the Devil has no more Power than God gives him; nor yet wicked Men.

She said: No body in the World has hitherto understood the Works of God; but every one judges of his Works according to their short Sight: But now that we are

(s) 1 Pet. 5. 8. (r) Luke 16. 25, 26. (u) Eccles. 11. 3.

arrived at the Fulness of Time, (x) he will give the Knowledge of his Procedure as to Men. You shall be perswaded of this, if you take good heed to my Discourse, and peruse a little the Holy Fathers who spoke of the Grace of God, and of all his Works. You must confess that the Discourses of a Child are much more clear and intelligible than all the Doctrines of these great Men: Because the Flour is now come that all these Things shall be fully manifested, and nothing shall be any longer hid from Men of the Designs that God has concerning them. You tell me that many Saints have been abused by the Devil and the Wicked, without having contributed to it by their Free-will: Which is true: For God holding the Will of these Saints in his Power, because they had yielded up their Free-will to God, he inclines their Will to good or necessary Sufferings. Not that God gives the Devil, or the Wicked, this Power to abuse his Servants, by his independent Permission, out of his absolute Power; but he permits (y) the Devil and the Wicked to tempt the Saints (z) with their Consent: For they having yielded up their Free-will into Gods Hand, he leads it alwayes to good: And seeing that Temptations and Persecution were good for some of the said Saints, he inclined their Will to desire them, and willingly to suffer them: Though in the sensual part they felt some Repugnance, the Divine Soul and Free-will were (a) joyful and contented with them, seeing these Evils beset them by the Will of God, to which theirs was united and conformable: And thus they suffered with their Free-will: Not that God permits the Devil to do evil to follow his Malice: For he can never consent (b) to any evil; but he permits him for the purging or honouring of his Servants, who desire with all their Heart to be purged or honoured that they may be made so much the more agreeable to God when he permits these Sufferings (c) as the true Means of their Perfection: For when there is no need of them for their Perfection, the Evils which Devils and wicked Men would do them cannot touch them, as it has

(x) Jer. 31. 24. (y) Job 1. 12. & 2. 6. (z) Job 1. 21. & 2. 10. (a) 2 Cor. 12. 10. (b) Psal. 5. 5. Syr. 15. 21. (c) 2 Cor. 12. 9.

often fallen out that Poyson (*d*), or other Mischiefs done to Saints, has done them no hurt, To shew that the Devil and the Wicked are still free on their part to do evil, without any other Permission from God but the Free-will that he had once given them; but that the Free-will of the good may alwayes resist them, and hinder any from coming near them, except it be expedient for the Glory of God, or their own Perfection: Then, though the Soul abandoned to God should not see the evils that the Wicked would do it, and should not formally oppose it self to them; God who still (*e*) watches for the good of his true Children, will never permit any evil to besal them, but what is expedient for them: Not that he will bound the Will of those Malignant ones that they may not be able to do evil to the good; but he will move the Wills of the good to withdraw from them, or to shun the Places and Occasions where the evil may besal them, or he will give so lively a Faith, that Poison or other Evils shall not take hold to hurt his Servants, whom he (*f*) keeps as the Apple of his Eyes. Thus it is that God carries as to us, doing alwayes good, and never consenting to evil, nor yet limiting the Free-will that he gave to Angels, and Devils, and Men, both good and bad, every one shall enjoy it to all Eternity without hindrance, either in the good or in the wicked. Therefore on all occasions we judge amiss of the Works of God, when we believe that he permits(*g*)evil in any whosoever. This proceeds from our ignorance of the Excellency of the free choice and the Dignity of the Free-will that God has given to Men; imagining that he governs them as Slaves, by force, or by his absolute Authority: Which is not at all so: For if he gave to all Creatures that are subjected to Man, when he created them, an amiable Inclination to acquiesce in and follow alwayes the Will of Man, without constraint, that he might serve him with agreeable Delight; wherefore should he not incline Man to follow the Will of God freely and without constraint?

(*d*) Mark 16. 18. (*e*) Psal. 33. 18. & 121. 4. (*f*) Psal. 17. 8. (*g*) Eccl. 15. 21.

The Twentieth and Second Conference,

*Speaks of the Disputes that are about Free-will
and Predestination.*

I said to her, *That this Point of the Free-will of Man was debated: That all acknowledged he was created in full Liberty; but that since his Sin he could no longer do good without a particular Grace from God.*

She said: Sir, I believe I have told you many times, that God never changes: Whether Men sin or not, he is not therefore moved. Free-will has remained with Men since his Sin (h) as well as before it. If he deprived not the Devils nor damned Souls of it, why should he take it from Man since his Sin, especially since he would pardon him, and yet take his Delight with him? Must he not after his Sin have had the same Divine Soul and Free-will as before (i)? For else he could never more have been led to good, nor be united to God if this Divine Quality were taken from him or diminished. What more particular Grace could be given him than to let him enjoy his Free-will after his Sin? A greater Grace could not be given him than this Divine Liberty, with which he might accomplish his Penitence, and do all other kind of good: For if his Penitence had not been accompanied with this Free-will, it could never have satisfied an offended God. This Divine Quality was needful to satisfy for the Offence done to his Divinity; And without having the Liberty to do good, by what means could he recover the Grace of God? If God had not left Man to his Liberty to do good, never any Person would have been saved, neither Adam, nor any others: For without this Liberty of doing good Adam could never have repented, nor all Men who have fallen in him. For none who are born since would have been free to do good, or to beg the Grace of God for fulfilling their Penitence, but every one would have been bent to Evil; since they had no other Liberty but to do evil: Of necessity they must have given themselves to

(h) *Deut.* 30. 19. (i) *Psal.* 110. 3.

evil, since they would not have had the Liberty to do good. I am an Enemy to all these Disputes ; and would wish that all Men would submit their Judgment to the Works of God.

I said to her, *That these Disputes were not ended ; but many held that God had decreed one Masse of Elect, and another of Reprobates, and that it will fall out so, do Men what they please.*

She said : How cruel is it to hear, Sir ! That God should destinate a Masse of Reprobates ! This is as if they would say, that God is wicked from the Creation of Men ; for if he were not he would not have created a Masse of Reprobates to be miserable to all Eternity do what they will. This necessity of being damned reflects upon God. For if he had not created them to Damnation, they could not be miserable to all Eternity : And God could not create them for Damnation but out of pure Malice ; setting aside this, he would rather have left them in nothing, than to create them for Reprobation. Truly, Sir, a greater Blasphemy cannot be uttered against God than this ; for it shocks all his Qualities of Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth, which are his Eternal Qualities (q) without which he can never do any thing. If he had created one part of Men for Damnation, he should not have done a just thing ; since these Reprobates did not merit Damnation before they had a Being, and could not in Justice be Reprobated without having deserved it. Neither could God exercise his Goodness in determining the Damnation of any : Since this Damnation is the greatest Evil in the World : How should he be good in doing so great evil to Men ? And how should he be true in reprobating those of whom he says, that (m) his delight is to be with them since they are the Children of Men ? He must want Judgment and Reason who believes that God created a Masse of damned. The Superstition of Christians must have invented this blaspheming against God to authorize their Authority, and to shew that God also uses Authority over Men as they will use it over their like : This is against Truth : For God is not partial, nor will he ever use Passion towards any. All these Words and Dis-

(q) *Psal.* 33. 4, 5. *Psal.* 89. 15. (m) *Prov.* 8. 31.

putes are so many Names of *Blasphemies*, of which (n) the *Whore in the Revelation* is full : For I do not believe that any other Sect or Nation sayes that Reprobation is determined of God.

I asked her, *What I ought to believe in this Matter, that I might not blaspheme against God ?*

She said : Sir, We ought to go to the Original of Man, and see in his Beginning, how he was created. God took not two Masses of Earth to create the one of them for Salvation, and the other for Damnation : But only one Masse of Earth, with which he created one Man only for Salvation (o), creating in him all the Men that ever were or shall be : He created them all in general in the State of Innocence and Salvation, and for this end gave abundance of Graces, both Spiritual and Bodily, and that equally to all, without exception of any ; giving to all a Divine Soul and a Free-will, that they might be capable to do all manner of good : And seeing God created all Men in *Adam*, he could not have created any for Reprobation, but all for Salvation, none excepted. This being so, as it truly is, no Body could be created for Damnation, as they would very unreasonably make it be believed : For if some must be necessarily Damned or Saved, they should not have Free-will : Which none can deny : For all Men received a Divine Soul and Free-will in *Adam*, who was the first of the Elect, and after him all his Posterity. For God never will'd (p) that any should perish, but that they Live. And seeing he wills that they Live, how could he create them for Reprobation ; since there can never be any Contradiction in God ? Never believe, Sir, that any was created for Damnation : But if any damn themselves, it is (q) contrary to the Designs of God, and because (r) they will needs use their Free-will to apply it to evil : For if they followed the Will of God, and the good (s) Impression that he has given them, they could never damn or destroy themselves, even though they had sinned : Because God desires not (t) the Death of a Sinner, but that he should be Converted and Live. By which we see that God does not Reprobate the Sinner more than the Just ;

(n) *Rev.* 17. 3. (o) *Wisd.* 11. 25. 4 *Esd.* 8. 59.
 (p) *2 Pet.* 3. 9. (q) *Prov.* 1. 25. (r) *Psal.* 81. 12, 13, 14.
 (s) *Prov.* 4. 23. (t) *Ezek.* 33. 11.

but desires that all should be Saved, and none Reprobated, as they Maintain. But Men now (*u*) being full of Vices and Passions of Love and Hatred, without any thing of Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth, they would fain give Authority to their Malice by making a God (*x*) to go before them in the Master of their Passions. And as they in taking Dominion over Men, do according to their Inclinations disgrace or favour them; they would make God as partial, as they know they are themselves, saying, that he damns some and saves others according to his Pleasure. Which will never be. For God is no more subject to Passions than to change. We ought alwayes to come to the Truth, and retake the Original and the Essence of Things, without amusing our selves with the Discourses of Men, who say and do according to their Advantages; and if they are not enclined to use their Free-will aright, they would fain lay the blame on God, saying, *They have not his Grace, or, They are not of the Number of those who are predestinated to his Salvation:* Which makes a great many perish through Sloth, or Negligence, saying, If they are Elected they shall certainly be saved; and if they are Reprobated, they shall certainly be damned, do what they will. This is contrary to the Truth. For God did not create Man a kind of limited Creature. And though it seems sometimes as if God determined good or evil Fortunes, yet nevertheless it is not true. For he will not determine against the Free-will of Man, who shall still be capable of using it well or ill. But because our Understanding is bounded, it can comprehend only the Accidents it sees, without discovering their Sources or Originals. For Example: We see a Man become poor though he Labour, and is no Prodigal. We say immediately; it is God that afflicts him by evil Fortune; while it is for want of Foresight or Management in his Affairs.

I said to her, *That it was not believed that God created Man for Damnation; but that God Reprobated Man after his Sin, which had undone them all.*

She said: Sir, You will find this absurd: For if all Men were created in Adam, they are all (*y*) also fallen in Adam, and consequently there could not be a Masse of Predestinated after Sin: Because all in general were Re-

(*u*) 2 Tim. 3. 2; 3, &c. (*x*) Exod. 31. 1. (*y*) Rom. 5. 12.

probbated

probated and Damned by the same Sin of *Adam* : He having sinned with his Free-will, there was no longer any thing sound in it : For if he had not given a full Consent of his Will to Sin, none would have been Damned, because of the Imperfection of his full Consent ; as we do not commit a Mortal Sin when our Will does not give full Consent to Evil ; and no Body doubts but *Adam* gave the full consent of his Will in disobeying God ; and consequently he is damned, and all Men with him, none excepted : For he could not have a divided Will, nor one part sound, and another damn'd : Because there was but one Man only, and he had but one Will, in which was included the Will of all Men that should ever arise from him. So that God could not pitch in him upon one Masse of Reprobates, and one of Saved : Because there was no longer Salvation in him after his Sin, nor in all other Men his Posterity. All were reduced into this damned Masse, without any exception : And as none could be damned before Sin, so none could be saved after it : Because in *Adam* all Men in general were contained, who have still shared in his Happiness and Miseries, his Favours and Disgraces, his Pleasures and his Penitence : All Men being inseparably united to the will of *Adam*, the Father of all living.

I asked her, *How it could be that some Men are damned and some saved, since there was so strait an union between the Will of Adam and that of other Men ?*

She said : This comes to pass, Sir, when every Man comes to the use of Reason. He goes out of the Power and Will of *Adam*, and is put into his own full Liberty, as *Adam* was at his Creation, with this difference only, that Men have in them the Malignity of Sin : Which *Adam* had not when he was created ; but only an Inclination to good : As to the rest, all Men in general, are put, (when they are capable of Reason) into the same Estate wherein *Adam* was created, with the same Divine Soul, wholly free and reasonable, capable of being led to good or evil, as *Adam* was. But that some are saved or damned, is not by any Necessity or Predestination ; but only by every ones Free-will, who are led to good or to evil according to (a) the Choice they make of the one or the other : Because on Gods part, Man is left free and

(z) *Mat.* 23. 37. (a) *Deut.* 30. 19. *Isa.* 66. 3, 4.

entire, as he was before Sin : For God never changes his Works. He has not for sin changed any thing in the Earth, nor in the Heavens, nor in the Elements, nor in the Beasts, nor in the other Creatures, but has continued them all such as he created them, without any change, but Sin has brought Malignity upon each of them, whereas before the said Sin all Things were good, (b) without any evil. Even so God has changed nothing in Man since his Sin. He remains entire in all his Qualities, both Bodily and Spiritual, except that by Sin he has contracted a Malignity (c), and an Inclination to evil : Which before he had not, but a bent and inclination to all sort of good. Behold this is the only change that Sin made in Man, without his being necessitated to evil, far less predestinated to Damnation : Since all Men received in Adam the Pardon of this Disobedience, having also received in him the Penitence, which was accepted for all Men in Adam so long as a Man is unable to use his own Reason : For then he is set at Liberty from the Power of Adam and that of his own Parents, in whose Will he remain'd till then : And coming out of this, he is free to choose good and evil, and neither God nor Men can constrain him to Salvation or Damnation : And that any is saved or damned, can proceed from nothing but the free choice that every one makes of following good or evil, and not at all from Predestination, as they very unjustly do imagine : For God will never deprive Man of his Graces how wicked soever he be, so long as he shall Live in this World. He will never take back the Graces which he gave him in Adam. They shall be still communicated to him, if he will make a good use of them. The Pardon which he granted to Adam, he granted to all Men, and no Body can believe without Sin that God should Reprobate him for the Sin of Adam : For by his Grace he forgave all (d) when he forgave Adam his Sin. He cannot retract the Remission which he then gave to all Men, to Reprobate them upon the same account of Adams Sin : For God never repents him of what by his Mercy he has once done, unless Man of his Free-will come to offend God by other new Sins : Which he is free to do. All

(b) *Wisd.* 1. 13, 14. (c) *Gen.* 8. 21. (d) *Rom.* 11. 16.
1 *Cor.* 7. 14.

Men were created in the State of Innocence in *Adam*; and all Men sinn'd in *Adam*, and also received the Pardon of this Sin in *Adam*: So that all they who dye in *Adam* are certainly saved by the Mercy of God upon the Pardon that he gave to *Adam*: But if his Children being come to the use of Reason do of their own Free-will turn to evil, they then fall again into Gods displeasure, and begetting Children in the same displeasure, they are in the same Condemnation with their Fathers, as being united with them till they come to the use of their own Reason: For then they begin to have a Being by themselves, whereas before they were reckoned to be one and the same thing with their Parents, because of the Sympathy there is in the Union of the Father with the Child, whose Will he holds in his Power, as *Adam* held the Will of all Men till they attain the use of their own Reason, so that till then they may be predestinated to Salvation or Damnation by the good or ill Will of their Parents, and not by the Decree of God, who cannot and will not destroy any Body, having certainly created and forgiven all the World, that all might be saved, and none Reprobated: For if he had precisely decreed some for Damnation, he should not have had so much Righteousness in himself as what he demands of Men: For he sayes to them, (e) *Love your Enemies, and do good to them that persecute you.* This Counsel would have had no Authority if he himself had Reprobated those who are become his Enemies. This absolute Reprobation would not be good, but the greatest evil that ever could be imagined: How could he command Men to do good to their Enemies, when he himself would do so great and eternal an Evil for the Fault they had committed against him, and that while they were yet in a state of Penitence, as they are during this Life, where Reprobation shall never have place, since till the very last Instant they may find Mercy and Pardon? This Reprobation must only operate after Death, and not during this Life: Because this is (f) the Time of Penitence, in which they who shall be certainly Reprobated can have no part; and it would be a very rigorous and unjust Thing, that God should oblige those to Penitence whom he absolutely resolves to damn. I believe, Sir, they confound the

(e) *Mat.* 5. 44. (f) *2 Pet.* 3. 9.

Times when they speak of Predestination, and take the present for the Time to come: For at the Judgment, God will then take Two Masses, the One of Elect, and the Other of Reprobates, who do what they will shall assuredly be damned: Because the Time of Penitence will then be past: But during this Life there can be no predestinated Reprobates.

I told her, *That well-meaning Persons did believe there was in this Life Predestination; and that God had here Vessels of Election and Reprobation, and both necessarily so.*

She said: This is, Sir, because these Persons, though well-meaning, do not discover the Goodness, and the Righteousness of God; and they judge only according to the Appearance of Things, and not according to the Reality: For God can never Reprobate any after that he has created all for Salvation; and he cannot damn them for Adam's Sin after he has pardoned it, and Man has undertaken the Penitence that God enjoined him on that occasion. If there were any Reprobated for this Sin of Adam, in strict Justice Adam ought to be first of all Reprobated, since he first committed the Sin. 'Tis sad to see and hear how Men (g) mistake the Qualities of God, making him pass as unjust and evil, like themselves. I am sorry, Sir, that I must be so prolix in this Matter, but the Thing requires it: Because it is a most important Point that regards the Glory of God and the Salvation of Men; and therefore I cannot speak too much of it. Be not you more weary to hear than I am to speak of it. I have still had strange Contradictions in my Spirit when I heard Persons of Sincerity aiming to maintain the Truth, and yet notwithstanding very far from knowing it, and taking the Sentiments of Men for infallible Truths, though very often they persist in their Ignorance which is so great and so prejudicial to the Salvation of many: For he who believes he is predestinated to Salvation will not be at the pains to procure it; and though he fall into Sins, he will not repent of them, believing that he cannot be damned, and that he shall one Day Repent, though it were but the Last of his Life. Consider a little, Sir, what sloth this occasions in those well-meaning Persons, and in what

(g) *Psal.* 14. 2. & 82. 5.

hazard they put their Salvation ! For it is a Delusion to believe, that we shall be Saved by God's Predestination, Live as we please ; for God will never Save any since *Adam's Sin*, but those who of their Free-will shall resign themselves to the Will of God. Though his Goodness Sav'd all Men in creating them, without any Co-operation of theirs, yet he will Save none without it, after they have their Free-wills to make choice of good or evil. God could indeed Save them before they made Resistance, and while he was absolute Lord of all Things : But since he gave them this Free-will to govern themselves and so many other Things, he cannot Save them without themselves. Therefore no Body should flatter himself to believe that he shall be Saved if he be predestinated ; seeing this Predestination can have no more place since the Sin of *Adam*. Every one must (*b*) exercise himself to work out his Salvation : Because no Body shall obtain it but he who of his own Free-will shall yield up (*i*) into God's Hands the Free Liberty that he gave him : These are the Elect : Because they being yielded up unto God, none can pluck (*l*) them out of his Hands, unless the Person himself should yet (*m*) withdraw from God : Which is almost impossible : Because God still directing him, his Will can no more be led to evil, than that of God is, unto which it is joyned and united. The Goodness of God replenishes it with so many Graces (*n*) that it is impossible not to follow them. How could the same Goodness ordain, that any should be Reprobated, since nothing that is evil can proceed from it ? Must not the Reprobation of Men of necessity come from their evil Will ? Since it is impossible for God to do evil, it is consequently impossible for him to Reprobate so much as one Soul. If it be, it is still its own Fault only, and not at all a Predestination to Damnation : Because God damns no (*p*) Body, not even at the Last Day of Judgment. For they who shall be then absolute Reprobates, shall condemn (*q*) themselves ; when the Justice of God shall appear to them, their Injustice will give Sentence against themselves, and confine

(*b*) *Phil.* 2. 12. (*i*) *Psal.* 31. 6. (*l*) *John* 10. 28.
 (*m*) *Heb.* 10. 38. (*n*) *Cant.* 1. 4. (*o*) *Isa.* 60. 3. (*p*)
Hos. 13. 9. (*q*) *Wisd.* 5. 2-13.

them to Hell as the just Merit of their Iniquities, and not at all as the Decree of God.

I said to her, *It was very probable, that God can damn no Body, since he is all good, and can do no Evil; that notwithstanding of this, we see according to our short Prospect of Effects as if Men were Predestinated to good and evil: As in the Conversion of St. Paul (r), and of (s) Mary Magdalen; and on the contrary, in the Reprobation (t) of Judas, and (u) of the wicked Thief.*

*She said: Sir, These different Accidents are not considered in their Source; but only superficially gone over, and judg'd according to Humane Sentiments, which does not penetrate the Righteousness of God: St. Paul was not only a Chosen Vessel on God's part, but also on the part of his own Free will: For after he had the use of Reason, he was alwayes (x) zealous of the Law of God, and 'tis very probable he had resigned his Free-Will to God according to his Knowledge, because all that moved him to persecute the Christians was only a desire to maintain his Law, which he believed was more perfect, as being given by God; and imagining that the Christians aimed to destroy it, he would maintain it, and believe that by doing this he greatly pleased God, who seeing this good Desire (z) would needs draw him out of his Ignorance in an outward and extraordinary manner: Because it is God's Property to abound in Grace, and to prevent Men of good Will by such Means as whereby they may discover that he favours them. Therefore he appeared visibly to St. Paul, by some Light, and made him blind, asking him, *wherefore he persecuted him?* Making him understand by these outward Signs the State of his Soul; by the Light he shews him, that he was in darkness; by the Blindness of his Eyes, the Blindness of his Mind, which must be directed to some one who might make him see the Truth; and by the Question, *Wherefore he persecuted him?* to shew him how much he was deceived, in Prosecuting the Christians who were the People of God. This he knew not, all these Things fell out not because God*

(r) Acts 9. 3. (s) Luke 7. 37. (t) John 17. 12.
 (u) Luke 23. 39. (x) Phil. 3. 6. (y) Gal. 1. 14. (z)
 1 Tim. 1. 13.

had partially chosen *St. Paul* to be his Apostle : But because he had of his own Free-will chosen to follow Good, and to resign himself to God. But whereas Men see only these outward Things, they believe God acts by Passion as they do, and that he prefers one of his Creatures to another : Which he does not at all : For he loves them all equally, as being all his Children, and nevertheless gives more Grace to those who are most resigned to him : And this with Reason : For a Son who does his Fathers Pleasure, and is dedicated to his Will, is more worthy of Favours than another who resists and despises the Will of the same Father.

Magdalen received also the Grace of Conversion though she was a Sinner : But if we consider well her inward Disposition, we shall clearly perceive that she was truly disposed to resign her self to God notwithstanding her Sins : For she no sooner heard the Truth from her Saviours Mouth, but she quitted her Sins (a) and bewailed them bitterly, derested her Vanities, and followed Jesus Christ through all. How many other Persons heard the same Truth, without resolving to follow him ? A Thousand Persons followed Jesus Christ bodily, and heard the same Words, but produced not the same Effects. This cannot come from God, who has still the same Efficacy : But it proceeds from the Indisposition of Souls who do not receive it effectually. And Men not being able to dive into the Interiour, imagine that this is done by God independently. In this, they are greatly deceived : Which they shall see at the Last Day of Judgment, wherein many shall be Saints who were despised and condemned in this World ; and many others shall be Reprobated, who here were held for Saints : Because Men regard only the outside : But God (c) tries the Reins, and examines the Conscience, which is known to him alone. Therefore Men ought never to judge nor dispute of the Works of God : Because they are blind and ignorant in his Matters ; and when they say that he Saved and Reprobated some in this World, they calumniate him, and blaspheme against his Qualities of Righteousness and Goodness.

(a) *Luke* 7. 38. (b) *2 Cor.* 4. 3, 4. & 6. 1. (c) *Rev.* 2. 23.

That Judas was damned, was by his own Free-will, and not by the Decree of God, who spoke more to him to convert him than ever he did to St. Paul or Magdalen; and that the wicked Thief is damned, was by his obduracy in Sin: For if he had acknowledged his Fault, he would have been saved as well as the other.

I said to her, That no Body thought it a Blasphemy against God to say, That none can be saved without the particular Grace of God, and that some have it, and some have it not; and that he gives it to whom he pleases.

She said: These Terms of speaking, Sir, make nothing as to the reality of the Thing. It may indeed be said truly, that none can be saved without the particular Grace of God: But to say that God gives it only to whom he pleases, and to understand thereby that he gives it to some and denies it to others with respect of Persons, is Blasphemy: Because he bestows it alwayes according (d) to his Righteousness, not according to his own Choice: For this is only the way of passionate Men, to favour those for whom they have an Inclination: God gives indeed more Grace to some than to others; but alwayes (e) in proportion as each one does more resign himself to his Will: For he says, (f) *Be ye faithful in little things, and I will place you over great things*: To shew that he encreases his Grace alwayes according to our Fidelity. That particular Grace which we stand in need of to be saved, was given to us all in the Creation of Adam: For he could not create us to Salvation without enduing with suitable Grace for it; and the Grace of raising us up again after Sin was also given us in Adam, which we might enjoy yet provided we use the same Means of his Penitence: And if we have sinned after him by our own Will, it shall be forgiven us provided we take up the same Penitence, which consists, (g) in the Shame and Confusion that Adam had, in the Fear he had of God, not daring to appear before him, and in the Accepting of the Penance of Labouring the Ground and gaining his Bread with the Sweat of his Face. Many Men now say they have not Grace that they might get rid of their Sins: And if they would

(d) Psal. III. 7, 8. (e) Matth. 25. 15. (f) ver. 21.
(g) Gen. 3. 8, &c.

examine their Consciences well, they would find it is because they have no Repentance nor Confusion for having committed them; nor yet the fear of God, nor a desire to do Penance for them: And that they may not acknowledge so great Faults, they say, they have not the Grace of God that they might amend. This is to blame God for their own Wickedness. For very often they love their Sins, and are only afraid of the Chastisements which these have deserved: So that if God had not a Hell to chastise them, they would never forsake them, so far would they be from desiring to do Penitence for them. And yet notwithstanding of all this they are bold to say, that they have not the *sufficient*, or *effectual* Grace of God, according to their *con'd* Terms, upon which they build great Disputes, which being well examined, we shall find them to be founded only upon Words; and that the Truth is alwayes true; and that God gave Graces to Man in *Adam* but too sufficient for Salvation, and even generally to all Men (*b*) for obtaining the Pardon of their Sins. This being so, why should we attribute the Loss of our Salvation, or the not amending of our Lives, to the want of Gods Grace? Is it not a particular Grace when every one as to his own particular has received sufficient (*i*) to forsake his Sin if he will, and to work out his Salvation? Whether God gave these Graces at the Beginning, or if he gives them only at present, they are still from the same God, the Giver of all good, as well in one Season as in another. What needs disputing whether these Graces are given now, or if they have continued with us since *Adam*? It is enough that we have them, and may encrease them by our Fidelity: For it pleases God alwayes (*l*) that we be perfect, and he is more desirous (*m*) to encrease his Graces than we are willing to ask them: And if we have them not in abundance, it is certainly because we have not sought them, or done our endeavour to obtain them: For God on his part is alwayes ready (*n*) to open so soon as we knock at the Gate of his Mercy, which is abundant to all those who seek it, without engaging into that foolish

(*b*) Eccl. 18. 9--12. 2 Pet. 3. 9. (*i*) Isa. 5. 4. (*l*) Mat. 5. 48. (*m*) Psal. 81. 11, 14. John 16. 24. (*n*) Matth. 7. 7.

Perswasion, That God will not give it but to whom he pleases ; since he is not partial, but alwayes does good (o) to all, even to his Enemies (p) themselves.

I said to her, *That there was much Ignorance in these Disputes : That every one maintained his own Opinion as good ; and that the best believed Predestination, because others attribute too much to the Creature.*

She said : Sir, I believe that no Body has hitherto discovered the Truth as to the Grace of God : For it cannot be true that God has predestinated any to Damnation, for the Reasons I have told you ; nor yet that Man has the Power to save himself when he pleases : Because the Habit of Sin is as another Nature, from whence we cannot deliver our selves. Even as the Souls which are in Hell, though they have their Free-will cannot use it in good, because they have given loose Reins to Evil, they cannot any more have the Will to quit it ; and being tied and united to all sort of evil Objects, they cannot find the means to do well, even though they should have the Will ; Even so in proportion, those who are yet in this Life, who would not resign themselves to God, but have followed their own Wills, are so habituated to evil, that they cannot have the Will to do well, but with great endeavours, and much force and violence to pull themselves out of the occasions of their Evils : With this difference nevertheless, that Sinners may yet in this World obtain Gods Grace, and the Remission of their Sins : Which damned Souls can never do : Because their Sins have brought on the Sentence of their Eternal Reprobation. Men are ignorant of many Things through the Presumption of their Wisdom. If they would become Children, and be converted to God, they would be far more wise. For (q) God reveals his Secrets to Little ones, and hides them from the Great and the Wise. I wish all the Books about these Disputes were burnt, and that every one would return into the primitive Dependence upon God, which comprehends all Divine Sciences : For he who is resigned to God, is (r) more Learned than all the Doctours of the World.

(o) *Psal.* 145. 9. *Eccl.* 18. 12, 13. (p) *Rem.* 5. 6, 10.
(q) *Mat.* 11. 25. (r) *Psal.* 119. 99, 100.

What can be ascribed to the Creature, since it has (*s*) nothing, that it has not received of God? There was a Time when it was not; and when it came to be, it's God who gave it being, and all the Powers of Soul and Body: The Instinct to do well, and the Liberty to love God come also of his Free Gift; if the Creature has a good Thought, (*t*) it comes from him. What can be ascribed to the Creature, since it is come of nothing, and can do no good thing without God? If he gave it that Inclination to good, or that good Thought when he created it, or if he gives them as yet, is it not still the same Giver, or the same God, who works Salvation in his Creature? Where is their place for disputing to know whether Man can save himself, since he is nothing (*u*), and has nothing (*x*) that he has not received? And this is an Eternal Truth, that Salvation and all other good (*y*), comes from God; and that all Evil and Damnation comes from Man; and he who is saved (*z*) cleaves to the Grace of God; and he who is damned resists it. What Argument will they bring yet in the Dispute about Grace after so clear and convincing Reasons? If Man may save himself when he will, it is alwayes by the Grace of God, who created him for Salvation, and imprinted in him this Inclination to good, and this desire to be saved. How can they attribute any thing to the Creature, even though it should be said, that he may save himself when he will; since this Will was given him by God? He cannot ascribe it to himself. Whether it was given him in his Creation, or at the Hour that he is Converted, this should not cause so many Disputes, so little profitable either to the one or the other Party: Because he who holds that his Salvation depends upon the Predestination of God does certainly conceive a Sloth to Good, being perswaded that his Salvation is decreed, do what he will; and on the contrary, he who believes he may save himself when he pleases, would not be at much trouble to advance in Vertue; since he believes his Salvation depends on his own Will, he will imagine that he shall come still in time to be saved, though it should be at the end of his Life. And hereby these Disputes instead of

(*s*) 1 Cor. 4. 7. (*t*) 2 Cor. 3. 5. (*u*) 2 Cor. 12. 11.
x) John 3. 27. (*y*) Hos. 13. 9. (*z*) Psal. 72. 28.

bringing any good to Souls, do cause them great Mischiefs of Sloth and Negligence as to Salvation, and Mistakes of God : For the more we will needs know him by Arguments, the more we sink into Darkness.

I said to her, *That all the Schools then ought to be overturned, since the Disputes which they reckon the most saving make us to mistake God and to neglect our Salvation.*

She said : Truly, Sir, this is very desirable, that Men would abandon all their Studies that they might resign themselves to the Will of God : since this is the one thing necessary, upon which our Salvation depends. To what purpose is it to make so many Books, so many Studies, so many Disputes, since all Perfection, the Law, and Salvation, consist in the RESIGNING of our Will to that of God ! All other Things are vain or useless : For we are created for no other thing but for ever to take our Delight with God. For what end should we amuse our selves, with so many different Things, and fill our Minds with Studies, Sciences, and Disputes, which are only for this transient Life, and in the mean time give great Hindrances to the RESIGNATION that we ought to make of our Will to that of God ? For as long as Man is busied in Studies, Sciences, and Disputes, he acts alwayes by his own Motion : Because those who are resigned to God, do nothing but receive from him, and while they do not affect any Sciences, (a) they possess more of them than all they can Learn in the Schools, which are alwayes full of many Defects, because every one is alwayes concern'd in his own Opinion, which can be only Humane, Limited, and Ignorant : And all these so imperfect Things hinder the Light of the Holy Spirit, which only enlightens Souls according as they are (b) emptied of all Earthly Objects of which Studies and Disputes are the most Lively to fill the Faculties of the Soul. This has occasioned the Holy Doctours to continue in many Errours touching God's Dealings : Because the Pre-occupation of their Studies has hindred the Light of the Holy Spirit, by which they might discover all Things, if the disturbance of their Humane Learning had been removed : For this hindered them from seeing the simple Purity of Divine Things,

(a) *Phil.* 3. 7, 8. (b) *Wis.* 1. 4, 5.

and the one thing needful for our Salvation, which is, the RESIGNATION of our selves to GOD.

I said to her, *That at least Divines would be needful, to expound the Scriptures to the People, and to teach them saving Truths: Since we are born in ignorance we cannot know but what is taught us.*

She said: These Doctours of the Law put to death Jesus Christ; and those who have followed them, have taught many Errours to the People: So that I believe if many of them had been Heathens, or brought up in uninhabited Deserts, without being instructed by any, they would have attained to a greater Knowledge of God, than what they have acquired by the Instruction of all these Doctors, who have often taught the Doctrines of Men, instead of that of God: And if these Persons were not full of these Doctrines, they would certainly be at more Liberty to resign themselves to God: So many Laws and Means which they have taught them, are so many Ropes and Chains which withdraw them from it. For it is certain that one who has been taught nothing, will still have a natural Bent and Inclination to Good: Because all that is Good, is Lovely; and if he shall apply himself never so little to consider the Works of God, he must of necessity be brought to Love him: For he would see that all that he made, is Good: By seeing the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, and all the Heavens, he must confess that the Authour of all these Things is perfect; and looking on the Earth, the Trees, the Plants and Elements, he must discover an incomprehensible Divinity, who had the Skill to make all these admirable Things. Which obliges all that are Reasonable to Love him. And when Man considers himself, and sees the Art there is in the Fabrick of his Body, in the Faculties of his Soul, in the Subtlety of his Spirit, he must confess that there is a God the Authour of all this, to whom all Things ought to be ascribed: Because no Creature is able to do any such thing. By all which things (c), a Man comes more perfectly to the Knowledge of God, than by Sciences and the Expositions of all the Doctors of the World, who have nothing but Limited Sciences.

(c) *Psal.* 19. 1, &c.

The Twentieth and Third Conference,

Shews, That it is by Faith only that we can be Saved, which coming from God works still Resignation : Even among the Heathens, &c.

I said to her, *That all this Knowledge of God was nothing but the Faith of a Heathen, that it was not capable to work Salvation, that to be saved we must have a Divine Faith.*

She said : Sir, You are ignorant yet of a great many Things, For that Faith which you call Heathen is Divine ; because it comes immediately from God, who has imprinted in the Soul of all Men this Divine Light (d) that leads them to the Knowledge of the true God. This is a Grace infused without the Concurrence of any Men, which is much more perfect then the Faith we give to the Things they propose to be believed by us in the Roman Church, many of which are very absurd, and neither respect the Glory of God, nor our Salvation. They give us for an Article of Faith, That there are Three Persons in God : Though nevertheless no Creature can comprehend what is in God, but by his Operations which we see with our Eyes, as that he is Almighty, that he is All-just, all Good, and True : Because all that we see he operates in us, and in other Creatures, bear these Three Qualities : But to know if there be Three Divine Persons in God, this surpasses our Capacity : Because God is an incomprehensible (e) Being, and was never discovered by any so as to know what there is in his Divinity. They propose also to us many Things for Articles of Faith, which are not of its true Essence ; seeing no Body can be saved without Faith, and they continually propose to us new Things

(d) Prov. 20. 27. John 1. 9. (e) 1 Tim. 6. 16.

for Articles of this Faith, which our Forefathers never believed as such : And if we cannot have true Faith now without believing them, it were to be feared that our Forefathers were not Saved, since they did not believe those new Things which are now proposed to us as Articles of Faith. They never believed that the Virgin *Mary* was conceived without Original Sin ; and now they would make this Belief to pass for an Article of Faith : Though nevertheless, there is no appearance of Truth in it : For the Virgin came out of the Masse of *Adam*, as all the rest of Men : And she did also undergo the Penitence common to all the Children of *Adam*, having gained her Bread by Bodily Labour, and suffered the Malignity of all the Elements ; and her Son *Jesus* himself shiver'd for Cold in the Stable of *Berhelem*, shewing that he was a real Man descended from *Adam*, subjecting himself to the same Penitence that our First Father had received and accepted from God in the Remission of his Sin. Why should they now lay it before us as an Article of Faith, that the Virgin was conceived without Sin, since all Humane Creatures which are born of Parents who live under the Dependence of God, having accepted the Penitence that God enjoy'd *Adam*, are all born in the Indulgence that God gave to *Adam* ? Wherefore should there be a particular Article of Faith for the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin ; as also for the Infallibility of the Pope ; seeing all these Things have no respect to the true Faith, which must work out our Salvation ? For if the Virgins Conception was Immaculate, or if the Pope be infallible, this makes nothing for our Salvation, nor as to the Knowledge we ought to have of a God upon whom all Things depend. This Light infused in my Soul, is true Faith ; and the Dependence that I desire to have upon the same God, is the Work of my Faith. What need is there to add yet to this the believing that the Pope is infallible, since I have the same Light of Faith, that tells me, No Man can be infallible ? Since *Adam* created in Innocence, and endued with all the Grace and Holiness that can be met with in any Man, did fall, and by falling so grossly shew that he was not infallible ; may not a Man who is a Sinner, fail or err ? All these Faiths and Beliefs are not divinely infused by God into our Soul, as that Faith is which

makes us know (f) a God above all Things, All good, All-just, All-mighty, but Incomprehensible. This Faith, Sir, which you call *Heathen*, is the True Faith, which is able to work Salvation in all those who in consequence of it do through Love resign themselves to the same God.

I asked her, *If she believed the Heathens would be saved, since they are not baptized?*

She said: Yes, Sir, All the *Heathens* who knew God by his Works, and resigned their Will to him, shall assuredly be saved: For they had operating Faith, True Faith, in believing that there is One Almighty God, who created the Heaven, the Earth, and all Things, and they had the Works of Faith, when they were resign'd to the Will of the same God. Which appeared in all those who despised the Things of this Life for that which is to come. They could not have done this but by a Divine Light, that God infused into their Souls: Because the Brutish Senses cannot despise the Pleasures of this Life: For they know no other; and Nature cannot betray it self by despising what is good for it, to choose what is evil for it. When we see one who may have Honours, Riches and Pleasures in this Life, and who yet quits them to be despised, poor and afflicted, we may well believe that he has the Light of Faith infused by God into his Soul: Because neither the Devil, nor Nature would ever induce him to do such Things: For no Body hates his own Flesh; and the Devil incites alwayes to satisfy Nature. And if we see one whom we call a *Heathen*, quit the Conversation of Men, and retire into a Solitude, we may well believe that he has the true Light of Faith, which makes Nature break off conversing with its like: For Society is a most Lovely Thing: Man is a Sociable Creature above all the other Animals; and if the Beasts are sad when they are alone, how much more must Man be so when he Lives according to Nature, unless it be some half-broken spirit, who through Melancholly loves rather to be alone to give the more Liberty to its Black Humours? This is not to be found in those who despise Conversation the better to wait on God, and to be delivered from the Troubles they have to live among those who know not God, but offend him every Moment.

(f) Heb. 11. 6. (g) Mat. 12. 33. 35.

How could I believe, Sir, that these Souls so excelling in Vertue should not be saved, even though they are not Baptized; since Baptism is only an outward Sign of the INWARD RESIGNATION which they have made of their Will to that of God? That God, *who (b) tries the Reins*, would he not save them, for not having observed this outward Formality, which is done in the sight of Men? We have not a Political God who has need of the Testimony of Men when he sees the Essence of Faith living in our Inward Parts. I reckon such Heathens to be more SAINTS, than many of those who are Canonized by the Roman Church; and wish, Sir, that you had attained to their solid Vertues: that you had a perfect Contempt of this Life, aspiring after another which will deliver us from so many Miseries; and also an entire Resignation of your Will to that of God, in which alone our Salvation consists, and not in so many sorts of Means which they set before us as necessary Things, or a Blind Faith of Things which often respect neither God, nor our Salvation. For though indeed it be Faith to believe that which *(i)* we do not see, nevertheless that is not to say that we must blindly believe all that they would persuade us: For God has given us an Understanding to comprehend what is comprehensible of the Works of our Faith. For Example: We must believe in God Almighty, who created the Heaven and the Earth. We do not so see this God in whom we believe; but nevertheless, we see evidently that there must be an Almighty God, when we consider the Works that he has done by his Almighty Power; and therefore our Faith is not blind, since it gives Light to see the Works of him in whom we believe. But diverse of these Things which they propose to us as Articles of Faith, are without any appearance of Truth, as is, the Infallibility of the Pope.

I asked her, *If one might be saved without believing all the Articles of Faith in particular?*

She said: Yes, Sir, we may be saved by the General Belief *(l)* that there is one only God the Creatour of all Things, provided that this Belief beget in us the resigning

(b) Jer. 17. 10. *(i)* Heb. 11. 1. *(l)* Heb. 11. 6. *Psal.* 36. 6, 7, 8.

of our Will to God in whom we believe: Because in this all Things are comprehended: since by being (m) resigned to God, we fulfil all the Articles of Faith, all the Commandments of the Law, and the Evangelical Counsels. And whereas it is said that all Christians are obliged to Learn the chief Points of our Belief, nevertheless this is not that they must Learn this by Rote or by Words: For it is enough to know the substance of them, that we may observe them; for this observing of them is more than to be able to tell them by Rote; it is the same as to all the Articles of our Faith in particular. It is of little moment that we have a particular Belief of so many Points, if we do not observe them all in general by the resigning of our Will to that of God. We have no need of doing any other thing to work out our salvation; for if we had not quitted this Dependence upon God, we should never have had the other Commandments, nor the other Articles of Faith. Our sins alone have occasioned all these Articles, and all these Commandments, and other Means: And sin ceasing, we should have no need of other Laws. So that our sins alone have engendered the Law and the Articles of Faith, which were given us only to reduce our Understanding to a **DEPENDANCE** upon God. The first thing that God did to bring back *Adam* to this Dependence from whence he had withdrawn himself while he would needs become wise in himself, he asks him, (n) *Adam where art thou?* Not that God could be ignorant where *Adam* was, since he knows all things: But it was to recal his Understanding to the Consideration of what he had done in disobeying God, that he might consider the miserable state to which he had brought himself while he would needs depend upon himself. The first Precept that God gave *Man*, was to make him know the state of his Soul, asking him, *Where art thou?* To make him re-enter into himself, and recollect his Senses, that he might see whither he had strayed from a Dependence upon his God, in which if he had continued, there would have been no need of asking, where he was; since he would have been still in his presence: But since he had withdrawn himself, it was needful that God should call

(m) *Psal.* 16. 8. & 73. 23, 24. (n) *Gen.* 3. 9.

him back again by asking him, where he was. But as soon as *Adam* acknowledged his fault, and offered himself to God, saying, Here am I, Lord, all confused and trembling, not daring to appear before him, but hiding himself as a Criminal before the face of his Judge, then God gives him the second Precept, saying, *That he should Till the Ground, and gain his Bread in the sweat of his Face.* This was the Penitence enjoined to satisfy for his sin, which being through Grace remitted to him, he ought nevertheless to suffer some temporal Punishments; and this in Justice: For God had not only bestowed on Man a Divine and Reasonable Soul, and a Free-will to love him; but also many Natural and material Graces: Therefore it was not enough for Man that God had granted him the Remission of his Trespases against him, in restoring him by a second Grace his Reason and his Free-will; but he ought also to satisfy for the Natural and material Graces, which things have not essentially the goodness of God to pardon this Injury received from Man. God, who is good, pardons him the Offence he had committed against his Majesty, and even makes him a garment to cover his Nakedness, that he might lessen his Confusion, he takes care also to thrust him out of Paradise, for fear he should come to eat of the Tree of Life, and by this means live alwayes miserable. All these Favours come from the Divine Goodness. But the Elements, the Earth, and the other Creatures, not having in them this goodness, set themselves against Man, and make him suffer, that by Penitence he might pay for the Rebellion he had committed against their Creator. This the Justice of God own'd, by ordaining *Adam* to undergo the Pains that all these Earthly Creatures should give him: Because they are justly irritated against Man, who was constituted their Lord to whom they ought to be subject and to obey: But since he was a Rebel against his God, they ought in like manner to rebel against him; and being Creatures incapable of Mercy, of necessity Man must satisfy them by a corporeal and material Penitence, like unto their Nature. This was ordained by God, by straight Justice, from which he never departs, exercising alwayes his goodness in that which respects himself, and his Justice as to all his Creatures. So this is the reason why God gave Precepts to Man, only for his sins, and this out of his great Mercy, and had it
not

not been for this, he would have confined Man to Hell for his first Disobedience: But his infinite Goodness has at all times exercised Mercy; and according as he saw Man stray from him, and quit his DEPENDANCE, he called him back still by Precepts, which were like so many Voices that cried, *Adam, where art thou?* For when the Children of *Israel* gave themselves to Idolatry and other sins, he gave them Ten Commandments, to let them see, that all the Things contained in them are those which withdraw Man from a Dependance upon his God. And afterwards when he would yet stray further from God, by coveting Temporal goods, or Bodily pleasures, or by coveting the Honours ^(o) which Men render one to another, more than to God, he then was so good as to take a Humane Body that he might teach us palpably that all these things did withdraw us from a Dependance upon God, setting before us all the Evangelical Precepts as means to return into this Dependance, wherein our Salvation consists: For he who lives in this DEPENDANCE, fulfils all the Laws, which cannot save us without this Dependance. For Faith alone operating can save us, but not the Laws, which are given us only to discover our sins. Faith working is that ^(p) which makes us know God and resign our selves to him, and it contains in it in practice all the Laws and the Articles of Faith: For he who has resigned his Will to God, knows well where ^(q) he is, and will also willingly satisfy ^(r) his just Penitence: He takes good heed also not to commit the things which are forbidden by the Ten Commandments, and not to omit the things therein commanded, and he punctually follows the Counsels of the Gospel; for he who is resigned to God, cannot any longer have affection for Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, Land, House, or any other thing; since God who holds our Will has no need of Earthly Possessions, but requires only from us the Divine Things which he bestowed on us, which are proportioned to his Divine Nature; he can be no more satisfied with Temporal things than a Horse can be fed with stones, which are not a food suitable to his Nature. In short,

(o) *Joln* 5. 44. & 12. 42, 43. (p) *Heb.* 11. per totum.
 (q) *Gal.* 2. 20. (r) *Luke* 23. 41.

He who has yielded up and resigned his Free-will to that of God, has no need of observing in particular the Articles of Faith : Because he is restored unto the first Essential Ordinance of God ; and while he continues in this, he has need of no other things ; because God would never have demanded more of us, and even at present (s) demands no more of those who will yield up themselves to him. Is it not sad, Sir, that Men now are so far from this One Thing necessary, and that they are subjected to so many several Laws by their sins ? Were it not better to take this first Liberty that God gave us, and to yield it up into his Hands, than to subject our selves to so many Laws, and so many particular Creeds, which do nothing but fill our Understandings, which ought only to be applied to know one Almighty God, the Creatour of all Things, and to be resigned wholly to him ? For our Understanding is not given us by God for the study of Letters, nor for Trafficking in Business : Because God has nothing to do with all these Things, he having created us for no other end but to take his delight with us, which can never have its compleat Joy but by the resigning of our Will to his ; this is what he requires of all Men.

I said to her, *That we find it not written that God precisely demanded of Man the Dependance of his Free-will ; which he ought to do, in case it were so necessary for Salvation.*

She said : How, Sir ! Would you make more reckoning of it if this were written upon Paper, or carved on a Stone, than if it were engraven in our (t) Heart ? Who is there in the World that has not engraven within him the necessity there is to depend upon God, since all know they have received their Being and all Things from him ? Is there any of never so little Reason who call in question whether to be saved we ought necessarily to depend upon God ? Because none can give us Salvation but he only, and if we withdraw from him, and subject our Divine Free-will unto our Passions, this is to follow our Animal Part, which has no other Salvation but the affording us a little Beastly Sensuality. Even Natural Reason it self may abundantly shew us the need we have of

(s) *Prov.* 23. 26. (t) *Deut.* 30. 14. *Rom.* 10. 8.

depending

depending upon God: Because all that we are appertains to him. Can we in good Reason deny a Person what belongs to him in property? Much less can we deny God the Dependance that we owe him. It is true he gave us our Free-will to use it to good or evil; but with this condition, that in case we should turn it to evil we should suffer the Pains that our Evils engendered. And who could ever imagine that Man should be such an Enemy to himself as to withdraw from his Dependance upon God, upon whom depends all his Happiness, to subject himself under the Dependance of his own Will, which is so vicious, and capable only of rendring us miserable both in this Life and in the other? A Man must have lost his Judgment if he do not know the Obligation he has to continue in a Dependance upon God for his Salvation, even though God had not precisely testified or said, That if we would be saved we must be subject to his Will; since Reason, Justice, and Truth, do dictate to us a Thing so reasonable, and the Brute Beasts themselves (*u*) teach us, to submit to their Benefactors, some of which have sometimes acknowledged all the Dayes of their Life some particular Benefits received from Men. Must God declare to them by Writ the Obligation they have to subject their Wills to his? He abundantly testified that such was his Will when he forbid *Adam* to eat of the Fruit of one Tree only, permitting him to eat of all the rest. Must he say precisely, that he would have Man to submit his Will to his? Nature, Reason, and Understanding were capable enough to comprehend that God would still reserve this Dependance upon himself, reserving for an outward Sign the Fruit of one Tree only. All the World knows well enough that God has no need of any Fruit, and that this Prohibition was the secret Commandment that God gave him not to withdraw from his Dependance: Even as he did not bid *Adam* in expresse terms, reflect upon himself, and consider the Misery into which he had plunged himself; but he sayes only, *Adam, where art thou?* These few Words were but too sufficient to make *Adam* understand, that he would do well to examine himself: Just so it was not needful that he should say in expresse Words,

(*u*) *Isa.* i. 3.

It is my Will that you submit your Will to mine. This ought to be understood sufficiently when he sayes, *I forbid thee to eat of this Tree*. Man in himself had no other Fruit worthy of God, but the Disposal of his Free-will; for all his other Things were either Humane, or Material. This Free-will alone was Divine: The use of which ought to be reserved for God alone: Even though he had never declared that he would have it for himself, yet Man was certainly obliged both by Divine and Humane Right voluntarily to offer it to him.

The Twentieth and Fourth Conference,

Shews, Why Men cannot abandon themselves to a Dependance upon God.

I said to her, *There was nothing more reasonable, nor more just, or perfect, than for Man to resign his Will to that of God, asking her, why Men had difficulty to do this?*

She said: Sir, There is nothing better for Man than to resign his Will to that of God, and we see nothing less practised than this: Because no Body applies his Spirit to consider this Obligation. One diverts himself by his Studies; another by his Offices; another by his Trade: Just as if every one had been created only for such Employments. They Rule on Earth as Little Gods, without thinking on this DEPENDANCE; and when God shall come at the Hour of our Death, he will deride the Men who have lived thus, as he did *Adam*, when he clothed him with a garment of Skins, saying to him, (y) *Behold Adam is become a God like us!* Men now may indeed at Death look for the like Reproaches: Because God has placed them in this Valley of Misery to do Penitence;

(x) Prov. 1. 26. (y) Gen. 3. 22.

and they will needs Rule and take their pleasures in it as in a Paradise, forgetting that they ought to depend upon God, and submit their Wills to his : And instead of doing this, they will needs govern themselves, and follow their own Inclinations. These evil Habits make it seem difficult for Men now to abandon their Wills to God, because they have possessed them till this present Time : And seeing all that has Life is in a continual Motion, if we live to our Senses, we advance alwayes in Brutishness : And if we live to the Devil, we advance alwayes in Malice ; but if we live to God, we advance alwayes in the Divine Nature. The difficulty that we find to resign our Will to that of God, proceeds certainly from this, that we are habituated not to depend on the Will of God, and that we have debased this Divine Quality, that he has given us, even to the Earth, or to Hell. When we leave it to the power of the Devil to Rule over our Free-will, we then render our Divine Souls, Devils ; and when we let it be Ruled by our Brutish Passions, we then render our Divine Soul, Beastly. What Injury does Man to himself that he will not yield up his Free-will into Gods Hand, who would render it wholly Divine ! This is the One Thing necessary, and we do not apprehend it ! Nevertheless, we cannot be saved by any other Means, since this is the only Way that leads to Salvation, we must of necessity retake it, or we shall all perish. We must be born again, and re-enter into the Original State in which God created us : For he has changed nothing in Man by Sin ; no more than he has done, in the Earth, the Beasts, and Elements, except that all these Things have contracted some Malignity in themselves, which Man must correct by resisting his own Will, in which this Malignity resides : For as long as we shall follow our own Will, we shall still grow worse : Because this Malignity that is in our Will, encreases according as we follow it. By which we may evidently see that he who will not yield up his own Will to God cannot be saved : For this Divine Quality which is in us, being become brutish, produces all sorts of Evils ; even as the Devils since they applied their Divine Qualities to do evil, have an insatiable appe-

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tite to Evil. But when this our Will is yielded up into Gods Hand, it is in its Center, and produces all sort of good : Of necessity therefore we must retake our (a) *Original*, and the first essential Commandment that God gave us, which is, a **DEPENDANCE** upon his Will. It is this that Jesus Christ sayes, (b) *Except you repent, you shall all perish.* The trouble that we shall have to resign our Will to God, will purge our Souls; and by this Violence we shall possess them.

I said to her, *That none had ever searched so deep into the necessity of this Dependance upon God as she had deduc'd it : Which notwithstanding was so clear and true, that no Body could doubt of it : That Man owed all to God, since he had received all from him.*

She said : Sir, The cause why they do not penetrate the necessity of this Dependance upon God, is, the Blindness of Men, who being diverted by their Worldly Affairs and Business, do not apply themselves to that which concerns their Eternal Happiness; contenting themselves with this, to believe blindly what is laid before them, that is, the Reasons and Sentiments of Men; without searching into the Essence of the Thing, or the Truth of their Original. It is in this that Jesus Christ said, (c) *If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.* They teach in the *Roman* Church a great many Lawes and Commands, Counsels, Rules, Means, Cases of Conscience, and a Thousand sorts of Inventions, to please God, which of themselves are not capable of saving so much as one Soul : While in the mean time all the World build their Salvation upon these Things : But they are deceived, since nothing can obtain it but a **DEPENDANCE UPON GOD** ; And as near as we come to this Dependance, we come as near to our Salvation ; and as far as we are estranged from it, we are as near our Damnation. We ought not to go by Four Ways when there is but one that is straight. The taking so many different Methods to go to God, are only By-ways, since there is but One only that can unite us to him. That is the **DEPENDANCE** of our Will upon his, all being comprehended in it ; because this is the Essence of all

(a) *Judg.* 8. 6. (b) *Luke* 13. 3. (c) *Matth.* 15. 14.
M Good :

Good : Since nothing is good (d) but God, no good can come but from him (e) alone, who does alwayes well, and never ill. Nevertheless he will not act in us any good but in so far (f) as our Free-will is resigned to him. He does alwayes good where he meets with no opposition, and he will never do it (g) where our Will opposes it self: Because it is he who gave this Liberty to the Soul; and he will never repent of any of the Works that he has done. If we could speak of God as we would do of a Man, we would say, that he is very sorry, when Man withdraws himself from him, and damns himself, but that he cannot hinder it. Nor that the Almighty Power of God does not reach all Things, or that his Power is limited; but it is because it pleased him to give Man this Free-will which he created him, that with it he might love him; and Man nevertheless turns away from loving Him to love some Creatures that are unworthy of him. This is an occasion for him to repent (h), to speak in our Gibberish, But God can never have any kind of Repentance, or any other Passions: Because he is (i) unchangeable, and never retracts what he (k) has once done. The first and last Thing that he demands of Man is, that he acknowledge in all things the Dependance that he has upon God; and that he so love him, as to yield up the Free-will he gave us, into his power. Lo this is all that God requires of Man. All the other Precepts, Counsels and Commands, are only accessory and casual, not at all necessary for him that fulfils this only essential Commandment, which Men now have forgot because of the Traditions of Men, which has so filled their Spirits that no Body penetrates now into the Essence of Vertue, and they know not wherein it consists. Which is very deplorable.

I asked her, *How it was possible that Man should come to such an Ignorance of God, and of himself, and to such a forgetfulness of his Salvation?*

She said: The Reason is, Sir, that whereas Men ought to apply their Reason and Understanding to know the Works of God, they have applied them to Earthly

(d) Mat. 19. 17. (e) Jam. 1. 17. (f) Psal. 81. 12--15.
 (g) Matth. 23. 37. (h) Gen. 6. 6. (i) Jam. 1. 17.
 (k) Rom. 11. 29.

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Things; and pried into the Works of God to apply them to Evil. For Example: We see some Rod or Chastisement befall us: We immediately say; that God is angry, and that he afflicts us. These are the Sentiments of the most pious, and they are much better than those who ascribe this to Fortune, or Second Causes, for there is no Sincerity in this; whereas the first has some regard of God, yet nevertheless it is so imperfect, that it is injurious to him, instead of being honourable. For if we speak truly of God, it cannot be said that he is angry, because he is not subject to any Passion, no more to Wrath than other Passions: Neither does he afflict us; because no Evil or Afflictions can come from him, as being the Source of all Good, from which no Evil can be derived: But these Terms are used even in the Holy Scripture, to make us understand something of God according to our Capacity: And if it were said, that any other thing than God afflicts us, it would induce Men, being so imperfect, to Vengeance, instead of Repentance. It is better therefore to use Terms which do rather excite us to Vertue, as the Scripture way of speaking does wisely; but we must not infer from this that these Terms are in effect true; but only to give us some signification, that is less evil, of the things that we ought to understand. And nevertheless, they insinuate sometimes upon certain Terms, and thereon build Disputes, and Questions, which amuse the World, and turn them away from the knowledge of God, and of themselves, and of Eternal Salvation, as the Debate about the Grace of God, or Predestination has done. They found it upon this, that God in several places of the Sacred Text has said (1); that he has *elect*ed one, and *reprob*ated another, or that he *forsook* his People, or hardened *Pharaoh's* Heart. These are all Terms accommodated to our Capacity, but it does not follow that they are so really: For God *Elected* all Men that were or shall be to Salvation (m), and none to Reprobation: Because God (n) does always good to all, without respect of Persons, or regard of Mens Merit or Demerit, for he respects himself only that he may still exercise his Goodness, from which there cannot proceed so much as the Reprobation of

(1) *Rom.* 9. 8c. (m) *1 Tim.* 2. 4. (n) *Mat.* 5. 45.

one Soul : For where there is nothing but all good, there no evil can be found ; and Reprobation is the greatest Evil in the World, which never can come from God, who is all good. And to believe that God gives his Graces only to whom he pleases, is also to render him partial and passionate, favouring one more than another. Which cannot be found in God, who is always just as well as always good, and never favours any out of Preference ? Though the Scripture uses these Terms, nevertheless the Favours of God are still enlarged according as the Soul resigns its self to his Will, and no farther : Because his Goodness is still accompanied with Righteousness. He still abounds in Graces, and denies them to none : If any do not feel the Operations of them, it is because he uses them according to his own Will, applying them to evil ; as is done in Nature, when they abuse their Beauty, Health, Wealth, or Honours to offend God ; who notwithstanding does not withdraw these Natural Graces because of their Abuse, no more than he does his Spiritual Graces ; which his Goodness still bestows, though we abuse them : For God can never cease to do well. And when 'tis said that he forsakes his People, this is also but a way of speaking : Because God never forsakes any thing, since he comprehends in himself all things. He cannot quit or abandon any thing, no more than he can harden the Hearts of any : For this would be to do an ill thing : But these are all Terms used in the Scriptures that Men may not interpret to an evil Sense the Works which they see fall out without their knowledge : For if the Text said that Men have the Grace of God, and also their Salvation at their will ; they so love themselves, that they would not any longer acknowledge God, but would ascribe to themselves the Power of saving themselves ; which would be a greater Evil than to say, that our Salvation depends immediately upon the Grace of God : Because this is true, but not in the way that Men take it, when they say, that they cannot be saved without the Grace of God, as if God had not given his Graces to all Men from their Creation, which, whatever a Man do, will never be taken back or retracted. If he hardens his Heart to evil, this is when he will irreconcilably withdraw his Free-will from a Dependence upon God : Then the Justice of God cuts short this Injustice. So that it may be indirectly said, that God hardens

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hardens Hearts, even as we would say that the Fire has burnt the Wood that was put into it, this would be a true thing: For the Fire consumes all that is capable of that Element; but if nothing be put into it for its Aliment, it would consume its self, instead of consuming any other thing. Even so is it as to the Justice of God, (o) which devours all that is opposed to it: Unjust Hearts are hardened by the Justice of God, which like a Fire devours all that is thrown into it. When a wicked Man has determined to run to evil, he falls into God's Justice, and his Heart is hardened; because he has cast himself into the devouring Fire of this Justice.

The Twentieth and Fifth Conference,

Shews, That all the Wisdom of Men is nothing but Ignorance in respect of the Divine Light; and that God will destroy this Humane Wisdom to give place to that of his Holy Spirit.

I said to her, *That she overturned all the Wisdom of the Learned, and that there was no more place for Study.*

She said: I told you long ago, Sir, that the Time is come wherein God will abolish the Wisdom of the Wise (p). 'Tis not only the worldly Wise, or Humane Wisdom that he speaks of; for that will perish of its self; but it is of the Wisdom of those who believe they are wise in the Works of God, or in *Theologie*. This Wisdom will be destroyed through the Goodness and Mercy of God: Because many of these are Men of good Inclinations, but they perish through Ignorance: For they maintain the

(o) *Isa.* 27. 4. (p) *Isa.* 29. 14.

Sentiments of Men which have been given them for infallible Truths: And you may easily perceive, Sir, that they are not such, nor founded upon the Wisdom of God, which is alwayes the same. If you consider those who have spoken of the Grace and Works of God, you will find them different in Sentiments, though divers of them were Saints. This may be an Evidence to you that their Wisdom was not Divine, and that their Learning has darkned the Light of Truth, which can never change nor contradict it self in any thing: And because this Learning is a Hindrance to the Holy Spirit who comes now to illuminate the Souls of Men of good Will, of necessity this Learning must be destroyed in them. This the Goodness of God will do (q) perfecting Praise by the Mouth of Sucklings and Infants. The Wisdom of God is our Mother, from which we ought to draw all our Substance, which Wise Men cannot do before their Wisdom be destroyed. This the Goodness of God will do in our Time, destroying the Wisdom of the Wise, and abolishing the Prudence of the Prudent, and they will be asked very shortly, (r) where is the Wise, the Scribe, and the Disputer of this World? For they shall not be found any longer, since God will abolish all their Prudence and Wisdom by the Mouth of Infants. I wish, Sir, you were the first, and that I might say to you with the Spouse (s) *Who will give me my Brother sucking the Breasts of my Mother, that I might find him without, and might kisse him!* The Wisdom of God is the Common Mother of all those who are resigned to him. Suck its Breasts boldly, they will fill you with Delights. And as soon as I shall find you void of all your Sciences, I will salute you in the Unity of Divine Wisdom. Quit, Sir, all other Wisdom, and depart from your own Wisdom and Prudence. It is an Instance of God's Goodness that he comes to deprive you of them. Do not believe, as the Wife of the World do, that your Happiness consists in your Wisdom. Since it must be destroyed before you receive the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and you confels to me that I overthrow the Wisdom of the Wise, and judge that it is not fit to Study

(q) *Psal.* 8. 3. (r) *1 Cor.* 1. 20. (s) *Cant.* 8. 1.

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any longer, walk while this Light lasts (t), fearing lest you be surprized with Darkness, which is now spread through all the World. Get out of it, for all is corrupted there. Keep your self solitary; for the World at present is a Temporal Hell, wherein nothing is to be seen but Objects which incite to evil. God is not any longer known nor loved there: Nothing is to be heard there but Blasphemies: The most Holy will say that they have not the Grace to do well, and that God has predestinated whom he pleased; that all these Decrees will come to pass do what they will; with many other Calumnies which they utter against God: And as his Name is blasphemed in the Eternal Hell; so is it in this World which is a Temporal Hell, where St. John has well said in his Revelation, (u) *That the Whore was full of Names of Blasphemies.* And if the best do thus blaspheme the Name of God, how much more must the Wicked do so, who deny him by Word or Deed, by denying him their own Wills, saying, they are their own Masters, and that they may dispose of all that belongs to them, or sometimes, what belongs to others, when it is entrusted to them? So that he who would take Sanctuary from the Perils of his Salvation, must retire from the World, where Salvation is no longer to be had: For all have forsaken God, and no Body knows him any longer: Every one having made an Idol of his own Imagination; or to say better, Every one makes a God after his own fashion: One says, that he damns; another, that he forlakes; another, that he permits evil; and that he rejects many; though God can never reject any, seeing he is greater than all Things, and comprehends all in himself, and can never do evil; and never ceases to do good. All the Qualities of God are unknown to Men: For none possesses true Wisdom; because none will resign their Will to his. Every one follows his own.

I said to her, *That I was altogether convinced; and that I perceived very clearly that all the Wise were greatly ignorant of the Wisdom of God; that all Studies and Disputes were founded only upon Terms and Words, or upon the Sentiments of Men.*

(t) John 12. 36. (u) Rev. 17. 3.

She said; I bless God, Sir, that he gives you these Lights. Do not look back any longer: For Men are deceived, and do deceive one another. They have long agoe quitted the Light of Truth; and the more they thought to find it, by Humane Reasons or Arguments, the farther they have been removed from it: Because the same Wisdom is needful (x) for understanding the Holy Scriptures that did at first dictate them; and the Men who are wise in this World are very seldome humble (y), and God (z) resists the Proud, and gives his Wisdom (a) to the Humble and the Little Ones. Therefore the Wise continue ignorant of the Wisdom of God, and are only Wise in themselves, and such Wisdom is (b) Foolishness before God; for it is of no use for the knowledge of Eternal Things; and the World pass will away with all its Sciences; so that all the Wisdom of Men is nothing but Vaniry (c), upon which we ought never to build our Salvation, since it is written, (d) *Wo to the Man that puts his confidence in Man!* Which nevertheless all Men almost do now: For it seems, for a Man to be sure of his Salvation it is enough to follow the Sentiment of some Author, or some Saint; though all Men may err and fail, even though they were canonized for Saints: This is not a solid Bottom whereupon to found our Belief and Salvation; because there is but one only Truth, which is God; and he who is not united to this Truth, is in Error and Lies; and still walking in Darkeness, he knows not whither he goes. Learning has led Men into great Presumption and Pride, which estranges them from God: So that they shall never know the Truth but by becoming Children, re-entering into the Womb of their Mother, which is the Original and the State of their Creation. They must re-take their first Aims if they would discover the Secrets of God's Grace, the Power of Free-will, the Qualities of God, the Love that he bears to Men, and the way how he Rules and governs them. Nothing of all this has been known hitherto.

(x) 1 Cor. 2. 11, 12. (y) 1 Cor. 8. 1. (z) 1 Pet. 5. 5. (a) Matth. 11. 25. (b) 1 Cor. 3. 19. (c) Rom. 1. 22. (d) Jer. 17. 5.

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I said to her, *That we had been for a long time in Errour; that it was a wonder God had permitted such Ignorance in his Church.*

She said : Sir, God never permits (e) Evil on his part ; but he will not hinder Man to use his Free-will (f) to do evil, or good, according to his desire. If Ignorance entered into the Church, it is not he that brought it in ; because he rear'd it up in Light and Divine Wisdom, which if it had followed, it could never have fallen into Errour : Because the Wisdom of God is all beautiful, and without Spot ; but Men who ought to receive and follow it, have withdrawn themselves from it, and embraced the Spirit of Errour, which has still encreast to a greater Darknes, to such a degree, as that no Body knows now where he walks ; and they take False for Real, and Lying for Truth, and which is worse, (g) they love their Darknes and Errours rather than Light : Though it be so agreeable, yet nevertheless it is despised by Men now, who do so cleave to their own Wisdom, that they despise the Truth that is presented to them, esteeming more their acquired Sciences than the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, which is the only Mother that can nourish our Divine Souls, which is at present despised by the Learned of this Age. Yea, not only despised, but even shock'd and persecuted : For it is ordinary for the Wicked to persecute those who do not follow their Iniquities ; and for Fools to despise what they understand not, or what they cannot comprehend. The Wise of this World will never comprehend the Wisdom of God (h) till they believe themselves to be ignorant, as they truly are ; and till they shall become Children ; not that they must become Fools, nor yet weak in Judgment, as a Little Child is ; but till they shall submit their Wills to God (i) as a Little Child submits himself to his Nurse, who takes him up, and lays him down, and gives him his Nourishment according as she judges it to be needful, without the Child's opposing himself thereto : And though he cry sometimes when his Nurse handles him, yet nevertheless she ceases not to do those necessary Things about him. Even so would God do with our

(e) Eccles. 15. 20. (f) Psal. 81. 13. Zech. 11. 12
(g) John 3. 19. (h) 1 Cor. 3. 18. (i) Psal. 131. 2.

Will if it were resigned to him. But when we will needs rule it our selves, he lets us erre and be ignorant of what we are obliged to know : Because *he (l) resists the Proud.*

The Twentieth and Sixth Conference,

Declares the necessity there is of becoming Children, that we may enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, renouncing all worldly Wisdom, and all Humane Abuses.

I asked her, *How it was possible for a Man to quit all the Sciences acquired after the manner of Men, that he may become a Child, when he is come to Age ?*

She said : Sir, If you do it not, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus Christ (m) tells this : And he cannot lye : But he presses this necessity of becoming a Child by threatening that otherwise we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; which would be the greatest evil that could befall a Man. It were better never to be born than not to be saved : And since we cannot be saved without becoming Children, we ought to become so at what Price soever. Would you, Sir, esteem more the Honour of the World, or your acquired Sciences, than the Kingdom of Heaven ? This would be very lamentable ; since all the Things of this World pass away like a Bird that cleaves the Air, and leaves no Mark of its Way : So when we shall have past through this World, nothing shall remain to us of our Sciences and Learning, nor yet of our Honour and Reputation : All ends with us ; and if some retain still an esteem of our Wisdom, after Death we are insensible of it. If we pleased our selves

(l) 1 Pet. 5. 5. (m) Matth. 18. 3.

while we lived here, the suffering for these Complacencies wait for us in the other World: And our having been wise here is so far from making us happy, that 'tis a great unhappiness to have lost the Kingdom of Heaven by this Wisdom. Lay aside, Sir, all these Humane Considerations, and become a Child, though you be aged. You have need to make the more haste; for fear lest Time and Life fail you. Never advise (*n*) with Flesh and Blood; for they deceive and corrupt us. Let us only consult with our Divine Soul, which is reasonable, and it will tell you, that there is nothing better or more reasonable than to resign our Free-will to God, who gave us it; and to submit it to his government as a Little Child: That on this our Eternal Happiness depends; and that nothing else can save us; because without this Dependence there is no Salvation.

I said to her, *That I perceived this Truth most clearly, that there was no Salvation without a Dependence upon God: asking, how I might now become ignorant of the Sciences which I had heretofore acquired, since I could not make my self not to have them.*

She said: Sir, Nothing can hurt you, if all be submitted to God. You cannot be ignorant of what you know by means of your Studies: But you can submit all these Sciences to God, and look upon them as Ignorances, as in effect they are. Do not apply your Mind any longer to the Study of Sciences; and believe that they are all vain in respect of the Wisdom of God. You shall know that you are resigned to his Will (*p*) when you seek no longer for any thing upon Earth, neither Learning, nor Wisdom, nor a desire to know any other thing but what may render you well-pleasing to God. For he who is resigned to him without guile, is not moved with any thing but what concerns his Glory: No other thing touches him. Whether he be learned or ignorant, is all one to him. He makes use of Learning in what respects God's Glory, and not at all to rule on the Earth: knowing well that he who is resigned to God without Learning is as great as he who is so with much Learning. And even

(*n*) Gal. i. 16. (*o*) Eccles. 37. 17, 18. (*p*) Psal. 73. 25, 26.

as one may be poor in Spirit, though he possesses Riches; so he may have much Learning, and yet for all this be simple in Spirit. When he submits all his Learning to God, he makes use of it as seems good to him: But as long as we think to profit by it, we are not yet become Children to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And since God makes appear to you, Sir, that there is no Salvation without this Dependence, let about it quickly, without considering whether you have Sciences or any other thing: Because God can make all work together for good. A Man must not regard himself; but the Will of God, who desires, that all Men, of what condition soever, keep themselves in a Dependence upon him, yielding up their Free-wills under his Power, without desiring to use them themselves.

I said to her, *That absolutely and irrevocably I resigned my self to God to be a true Child; but that I found yet some difficulty to forsake the Church.*

She said: Soft, soft, Sir, You must never renounce the Holy Church. Rather die than do so: You must only renounce the Abomination which is crept into the *Roman* Church now. Do you not see that she has falsified her Faith to her Lawful Husband Jesus Christ, and that she has not continued faithful to Him. I would be well pleased if you could shew me so much as one Point that she observes of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, or so much as one thing that she practises which is not directly contrary to the Life and Doctrine of her Lawful Husband, who came down from Heaven to Earth to teach her them, both by Word and Deed: All which Things are despised by her who ought to be his Spouse. I have often spoke to you of her Excesses and her Adulteries. Would you yet hold her for the Holy Church since the Devil (q) has plac'd his Throne in her? What Weakness of Spirit is it, to feel a Repugnance to renounce a Thing so wicked, under frivolous Perswasions that she is Holy? When God gave us Understanding and Reason, this was for no other end, but to make us discern good from evil, that we might not perish blindfold: And now you would change the Designs of God by stifling your Reason and Under-

(q) 2 Theff. 2. 4.

standing that you may follow evil blindly : And when you see it so plainly evil you form some foolish Imagination that nevertheless it is good ! This must needs come from a pure Infatuation of Spirit : For even Natural Reason discovers to us manifestly enough that the *Roman Church* now is not the Spouse of Jesus Christ ; because she does not follow her Husband in any thing ; and two so distant Things cannot make an Alliance. How can you have a Repugnance to quit her who has abandoned her God ? If the Beasts and insensible Creatures, and all the Elements, did rise up against Man when he quitted his Dependance upon his God ; How should not Man, who is so reasonable, rise up against that Church, who has quitted the Dependance upon her God because she will not depend any longer but upon her self. One should rather have a Repugnancy to remain under her, than to quit her : Or else we have less Resentment of the Offence that is done our Creatour than the Elements and the Beasts, or inanimate Things, who have still resented the Wrong that was done their Creatour, even at the Death of Jesus Christ, (r) the Rocks rent, and the Sun was darkened. Have you less affection, Sir, for your God, than these Stones, that you do not resent the continual Injuries which the Church does to God ? If a beautiful Angel became a Devil for having desired in his Heart to be equal to God, what shall she become who prefers her self to the same God without desiring to give deference to him in any thing ? I do even bewail, Sir, your Blindness in this Point ; and I cannot believe that your Repugnancy proceeds from your Reasoning ; but from some Habitual Concern that you have for the Church : For if you applied your Understanding to consider the Original of this Repugnancy, you would see clearly that it proceeds from the pious affection that you have for the Church ; but that you do not take her where she is : For we amuse our selves in this, as in other Things, with Terms and Expressions of Men : And when we hear them call the *Roman Church, the Holy Church*, this Word begets in us an affection for her, without discovering, if it be she of whom they speak. When they would beguile a Child, and

(r) *Matth.* 27. 51.

make him afraid of his Father, they put his Cloak and Hat upon a Stick in some obscure Place; which the Infant perceiving, believes it is truly he; and fears and respects him. But if he draw nearer, and take by the Cloak, he perceives easily that he is beguiled, and that what he took for his Father, was but a Piece of Wood. Truly, Sir, in the Darkness in which we live at present, they make us see just the like, by covering *Rome* with the Cloak of the Holy Church, and muffling her with the Head of Jesus Christ; we Fear and Reverence her, as if she were our True Mother the Holy Church, Authorised by Jesus Christ, and his Lawful Bride: But when we approach nearer, and lift up this Cloak, we shall see clearly, that 'tis nothing but Wood, instead of Holiness, which can be of no use to us, except to warm us in the Winter Season. Truly, Sir, we ought not to be so much Children in what regards our Eternal Salvation. We ought not to walk blindly in so important an Affair. If Men apply their Minds wholly to make a Stocking, or a Shoe, why should not we apply them more to save our Souls? It is good to have (s) the Simplicity of the Dove with respect to God: For he who is resigned to him, ought to do nothing but let himself be guided by him as a Little Child: But we must have the Prudence of the Serpent, to take Heed of Men, who may deceive, or be deceived: And when they say, *Lo the Holy Church*, we must remark narrowly, if she be truly so, or if it be a Fagot covered with her Garment. It is for this only that God gave us Understanding, that we might still discern true Good from what is false, precisely in the matter of our Salvation: Because all other Things are vain and perishing, unworthy of a serious Application of Spirit; since it ought to apply it self only to Eternal Things, for which we were created: And our Misery arises from this that we make more serious Enquiries to discover the Turnings and Windings of the Affairs of the World than those of our Salvation. In which the Scripture has reason to say, that (u) the Children of this World are wiser than the Children of the Kingdom: Because before we engage in any Place, Office or Traffick, we still search narrowly if it is profitable

(s) *Mat.* 10. 16. (t) *1 Cor.* 10. 15. (u) *Luke* 16. 8.
and

and advantageous for us : And we would take heed not to trust to Mens Words, or to believe blindly that a Thing is good without having first made the Experiment of it. If we have so much Foresight in what respects the Earth, how much more ought we to have it for that which respects Heaven ? We trust our Salvation blindly to what they tell us that the *Roman Church* is our Mother the Holy Church ; and we do not dive into this Affair which concerns us so much, to know, if really she has the Quality of our true Mother, and if she be allied with our true Father, who is unchangeable in all his Qualities, to whom this Spouse ought to be alwayes conformable. We must see if what they call our Mother, has the Spirit and the Works of our Father ; and if we find no Likeness in her, we must renounce her, and hold her as a Deceiver and a Liar, unworthy of our Affection.

The Twentieth and Seventh Conference,

Shews, The true Marks whereby to discover where the True Church is, and that it concerns every one to examine it.

I asked her, *How I might discover where my true Mother, the true Church is ? What Marks there are whereby to know her, that I may not be deceived ?*

She said : Sir, You shall discover her by this, that she will follow the Footsteps of Jesus Christ, and be wholly conformable to his Doctrine. There is but one (x) Church only, as there is but one onely God ; and there is so strait a Bond and Alliance between God and the Church, that they are but one and the same Thing, as it is said, that in

Marriage (γ) Two are but one Flesh; so in the Alliance of God, with the Church, two are but one Spirit (ζ). God is the Bridegroom, and the Soul is the Bride: As it is said concerning Adam; (a) *Let us make a Companion meet for him, for it is not good that Man should be alone.* This is the Figure of what he had said before, (b) *Let us make Man after our own Likeness,* because it was found meet that God should delight himself with something that was like to him. For this cause he created the Divine and Eternal Soul, and plac'd it in the Body and Understanding of Man, that it might multiply and communicate it self: For it is the Property of Good to be communicative. This Divine Soul being form'd in Time, must live for ever, else it should not have been Divine, nor capable of being united and ally'd to God, who created it for these ends. And as Adam and Eve ought to have been united in Heart, Body and Will; so the Soul ought to be united in Love, Understanding, and Will with God: Not that Natural Love, nor that Humane Understanding, no more than our bounded Will: Because all this has no Sympathy with God, and they are but the Case wherein God has shut up this Divine Soul, which is Free and Eternal, as God. This Divine Reason and Free-will, make the Church by the Alliance that God makes with it, which is much more strait than the Alliance that this Divine Soul makes with the Animal Soul of Man, which do so nearly approach one another, that no Humane Spirit is able to distinguish them, no more than any can distinguish the Free and Rational VWill from God himself: Because he has so straitly united them, that (c) the Soul is God, and God is the Soul; as the VWill of Eve was that of Adam, so the VWill of the Soul is that of God. By which you may still discover, Sir, where the Spouse of God, or the True Church is: Because where she is to be found, she carries still along with her the same Qualities of her VVell beloved; and when you do not find them in those who call themselves the Church, believe firmly that they are all Cheats: For the Spouse of God will be alwayes comely, and there can be no Blemish in her: Because she shall never be parted

(γ) Matth. 19. 5. (ζ) 1 Cor. 6. 15. (a) Gen. 2. 18.
 (b) Gen. 1. 26. (c) John 17. 23. 1 Cor. 6. 15.

from the Qualities of her Husband, alwayes Just, Good, True, and All-powerful. And when you shall see *Sion, Jerusalem, Judea, or Rome*, such as you call the Church, to be fallen away from these Qualities, never believe that she is your Mother the Holy Church. Upon these Accounts Iesus Christ has so often (d) warned you to beware of false Christs and false Prophets: For they come to delude and deceive many. Do not let your self be deluded, Sir: For there shall never be but one True Church, which shall be united to God: VVhosoever has not this Unity, is not the Church; but they are Seducers of the People; who under this Cloak of God's Spouse, do seduce many. You must lift up your Head, and look on high, to see whence the Church took her Original; and you will perceive that the Church is no other but the Alliance that God made with the Divine Soul of Man, which he made his Spouse, though she was unworthy of it. He so ennobled her that he would joyn himself to her, and ally with her by an indissoluble Alliance, which can never end, for the Two Parties are Immortal, to wit, God and the Divine Soul: But to take for the Spouse of God Persons who are no wayes in the Spirit of God, nor in Union with him, and to reverence them as the Church, is to wrong the Honour that we owe to God. To see a Church seek the Honours, Pleasures, and Riches of this VVorld, and to believe that she is the Spouse of God; is to derogate from her Divine Quality, and to ascribe the Honour to Vice, that is due only to True Vertue. VVe should not thus let them cover our Eyes as they do to those who are going to be hanged that they may not see their doleful End. VVe must take off this Bandage, that we may look about us, and learn, where the True Church is, which can save us; and not suffer our selves to be led on blind-fold to Eternal Death by VVords or false Appearances; since Truth only is capable to save us.

I said to her, *That I had never yet discovered Souls united to God; and that nevertheless I believed I was in the Church?*

She said: Sir, You are deceived: For the Church is no where but in the Souls that are united to God; no more

(d) *Mat.* 7. 15. & 24. 4, 5, 11, 24, 25.

than a Woman can be the Spouse of a Man who has never approached her. We must not believe that the Church consists in wearing a Garment of Purple, or Red, or Fine Linnen. These are rather the Marks of the Reprobation of the (e) falsely Rich Man, who was buried in Hell, and the Scripture brings no other cause of his Damnation than these Fashions of Apparel, and that he was Rich, and a Feaster. If all these Things were Marks of his Damnation, why should they be now a dayes the Marks of the Holy Church? God is not changeable. He cannot now unite to himself what he then Reprobated and Condemned. No, no, Sir; the Spouse of God will never be vain, nor proud, nor polluted with any sin. For she (f) is all pure, Do not think that you are in the Church, when you are under Persons who seek Riches of this World; for such Souls are Adulteresses, and have abandoned their lawful Husband, and live in Adultery (g) with the Kings of the Earth. Which ought to make you abhor her, instead of cleaving to her. If you have never met with Souls resigned to God, you have never found the True Church: Because there never was any other, and never will be hereafter. She must notwithstanding be somewhere in the World, though she were but in one only Soul: Because the Works of God can never perish. He has made this Alliance with the Soul of Man, and he will never retract it. There have been in all Times some who have been his True Spouses, and resigned to him; but at present they are very rare. Strive, Sir, so to do as that yours may be so, and then you shall not need to seek the Church without you. For as soon as your Will is resigned to God, he unites it to himself, and makes your Soul his Spouse. Whether others whom you know be so or not, concerns you little: And though all the Souls of Men were God's Spouse, if yours be not, you lose all.

I asked her, *Whether God had not had a True Spouse still since the Creation of Adam; and if the People of Israel, the Jews, or the Christians, were not his Spouse?*

She said: Sir, There have been in all Times some Souls among these People, who were resigned to the Will of God. These in particular were the True Church; but

(e) *Luke* 16. 19. (f) *Cant.* 4. 7. (g) *Rev.* 17. 2.

not all that People : Though indeed they all called themselves the People of God, yet nevertheless they were not so : For it is said somewhere, *(b)* If you were the Children of *Abraham*, you would do the Works of *Abraham* : To shew, that all God's Children are not his Church or his Spouse ; but those only who do the Works of the Spouse : That is to say, who are joyned by a Resignation of their Will to that of God. Those are the only Spouses of the same God.

This Alliance of God with Man was first of all made when Man was created. The Soul of *Adam* made an Alliance with God, and became his Spouse : But being afterwards in the Earthly Paradise, the Soul of *Adam*, though Divine, falsified its Faith to its Husband ; and instead of taking its delight only with its God, for whom it was created, it joyned it self in affection to the Creatures, and did eat of a Fruit of which God had forbidden him to eat. But as a good Husband does not still put away his Wife for One Fault that she has committed ; so also God, the Fountain of all Goodness, does not cast off the Soul of his Alliance, though she had but too much merited it. On the contrary he seeks Her, and calls upon Her to make her return to his Friendship. He cries, *(b)* *Adam, where art thou ?* As if he had said, Wherefore hast thou forsaken me ? He shews him also that he lov'd him, by covering him with a Garment, to lessen his Confusion ; and seeing he was ashamed and repented, God forgives him his Fault, and enjoynes him only a short Penance, to wit, That he should be deprived of his Presence, during this Life, during which he must labour for his Bread. But he does not at all break the Alliance he had made with him. His Soul remains still the Spouse of God, except that it is deprived for a certain time of its wonted sight of Him, being restored as to other things into his Grace and Friendship : For God will never destroy *(i)* the Works that he has made : And the Alliance he made with the Soul of Man was not broken off by his Sin : Because the Mercy of God *(l)* surpasses all his other Qualities. His Justice might have condemn'd Man ; and his Goodness ordains him only Penitence for his Sin : In which he shews

(b) John 8. 39. *(b)* Gen. 3. 9. *(i)* Psal. 138. 8. *(l)* Psal. 145. 9.

the Excesse of his Mercie and the Love he bears to Souls, leaving them all in *Adam* free to be his Spouses, none excepted : For he could not forgive *Adam*, without forgiving all his Posterity. Because he held the Wills of all Men in his : And being yet but one Man only, and one Will only, he could not pardon one without another : For neither the Body, nor Will of *Adam* were divided, that one part might be pardoned, and another reprobated.

I spoke to you of this already, Sir ; but it seems you did not sufficiently conceive it. Therefore I cursorily repeat it, that I may the better shew you how God has always had a Spouse or Church : For if he had not forgiven *Adam*, none could have been the Spouse of God : Because all were become his Enemies by his sin : Which if they had continued to be, he would not have been so unjust as to thrust Man out of the Earthly Paradise, and oblige him to so hard a Penitence only to damn him at last, as Men now affirm, That God Reprobated some after the Sin of *Adam*. If this were true, he would certainly have confined them to Hell from the Moment of their Reprobation, instead of sending them yet into this World to produce a Perverse and reprobate Generation. God could not be good nor just in doing this : But really cruel and partial towards those Reprobates, who might justly murmur against him with more reason than the Labourers (*m*) who received no more for the Work of a whole Day, than they who had wrought but for One, Two or Three Hours : For they had no reason ; because they received what was due to them, and what they had agreed for ; but these Reprobated have Laboured as much as those Elect, since they have all equally performed the Penitence enjoyned to *Adam*. And if the Father of the Family gives as much to the Last Comers as to the First, it is not that he is partial, or that he favours one more than another ; but that he exercises his Goodness towards the Last because they had been no sooner called to Work, of which they themselves complain, saying, *Lord, No body has employed us.* So that God exercises towards them both Goodness and Justice. But if out of the Masse of *Adam* he had fore-ordained some Elect, and others Reprobate ; he should

(*m*) *Matth.* I. I, 15.

have done against both the one and the other of these Qualities. Which he cannot do : And the Goodness and Mercy of God (n) spreading themselves alwayes over all his Works ; he did assuredly Elect and Pardon all Men in general in *Adam* : So that after him all they who will resign their Free-will to his, are all his Spouses and his Church. Therefore in all Times and in all Ages he has still had a Church upon Earth, and will have till all Evil be at an end. Since *Adam*, many Souls have been resigned to the Will of God, as he himself was after his Sin, having never more re-taken their own Free-will, but left it still to be governed by God, subjecting themselves voluntarily to the Penitence that was enjoyn'd him. These have been the Church and the Spouses of God. *Adam*, *Eve*, and their Children until they had the use of their Reason, were the First Church ; and afterwards *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, and others who in like manner resigned their Will to God were at that Time the Second Church ; and thus going on from Time to Time, this Church has always continued, either of many Souls united to the Will of God, or of few. This makes nothing to the first Design, that God had to Ally himself with the Soul of Man. It is still his Spouse though there were but one Soul only, as there was but one when *Adam* was created alone. This Number of many only makes those Blessed who are of the Number : For God on his part, takes as much delight with one Soul only that is resigned to Him as He would do with a Hundred Millions : For there is nothing to do with Quantity when the Business is about Quality. If an Hundred Millions of Souls are resigned to God, they make altogether but one only Church, which could consist as well in one Soul only, as in this great Number : Because the Spouse of God (o) is One : And as in Nature a Man may have as much Contentment in Marrying a Wife who is Little and Tender, as one that is Big and Lumpish : Without comparison God is as much Honoured, though there were but one Soul only in the World that were resigned to him, as if all Men in general were so ; who only can receive themselves the Honour of their Happiness, every one for his own particular : For nothing can

(n) *Psal.* 145. 9. (n) *Cant.* 6. 9. (o) *John* 17. 21, 23.

be taken away nor added as to God, who is and comprehends all Things. His Alliance that he has made with the Soul of Man, is not encreas'd or diminished by the great or small Body of his Church. He will still have his Spouse, with whom he will take his delight in the kind that he created, which was but one Man alone. She shall still be preserved as the Rose among Thorns. How wicked soever the World may become his Church will still remain there in her kind. The Church will always have her Beauty and her Qualities, as much in one Soul alone as in an Hundred Millions, which altogether would make (p) but one, no more than if there were but one alone. After this manner God in all Ages has had his Church upon Earth: But in how many Souls it consisted, is known only to God. The People of *Israel* were called the People of God, among whom there were assuredly Souls resigned unto him. These made up the Church in their Time, and no others. Even so among the Jewish People, and also the *Catholicks*. The Church of God has always been among them, since Gods Alliance with Man could never fail: But to believe that all that Masse of People who call'd themselves the People of God were the Church, is to deceive our selves: Because there never will be any other but the Souls which of their Free-will do resign themselves to the Will of God. All others are only Carnal and Material Churches.

I said to her, *That we strayed much, and greatly erred, in believing that all who are called the People of God do make up the Church, and that at present she consisted of Christendom, which Jesus Christ authorised, and said, that (r) what she did on Earth, should be done in Heaven.*

She said: Sir, Men are blind, and walk where they see nothing. I believe that the Spouse of God resides among Christian People, though it were no more but in one Soul alone: But to believe that this Church consists of that great Number of Persons who are called Christians, is greatly to deceive our selves: Because of them God may say truly, (s) My People have forsaken me: Which appears by the whole Behaviour of these Christians now,

(q) 2 Cor. 2. 6. 17, 18. (r) Matth. 16. 19. (s) Jer. 2. 13.

who live wholly as if there were no God, every one being so wedded to his own Will, as if it had only been given him to satisfy himself; and using the Authority that God gave his Church as if they were Sovereigns and independent upon him. All which things are inconsistent with the Spouse of God, which moves not but by the Motion of her Husband, of whom she knows she holds all things, and she never ascribes any thing to her self. How should this Masse of Christians compose the Church, since among them we do not observe almost any who will resign their Wills to the Will of God? And those who make their Profit of the Authority that Jesus Christ gave his Church are Robbers, and take what belongs to another: For when Jesus Christ said: *Whatsoever you shall do here on Earth I will do in Heaven*, He spoke to his Spouse, and not to his Enemies, as those Persons are who cleave to their own Wills, who do very impertinently usurp the Title of the Church, or Spouse of God: For his True Spouse is in nothing contrary to her Husband: Being united by a Holy and Divine Will: So that they cannot disclaim one another, and therefore what she shall do on Earth shall be done also in Heaven, by their Unity of Wills, which are still conformable: Though this Will be wrapt up in the Spirit and Body of the Spouse which is yet on Earth, it is nevertheless united to that of her Husband which is in Heaven: And therefore what the one does, the other approves: Because one and the same thing cannot be against it self.

I said to her: *That this Quality of Union of Will to that of God, was a Divine Thing, and invisible to Bodily Eyes; asking her, how I might discover and know the True Church and Spouse of God?*

She said: Sir, You will perceive it sufficiently, even by the Eyes of the Body, if you seriously apply your Spirit to discover her Qualities: For St. John in his Revelation paints out all her Qualities, under the Figure of a Woman who sits in the Sun, and has the Moon under her Feet, and upon her Head Twelve Stars. This Woman is the True Church, and the only Spouse of God. She is first seated in the Sun, that is, that the Spouse of God re-

poles always in the Light of Truth, and never turns aside from it; that she does not walk therein as a Passenger, but sits in it as in her Place of Repose. Secondly, that she has *the Moon under her Feet*: That is, that all Things that are mutable and changeable as the Moon, such are the Goods, the Riches, the Honours and Pleasures of this World, are all trod under feet by the Church or Spouse of God. Thirdly, That she bears *on her Head Twelve Stars*: These are the Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit, with which the Spouse of God is still inseparably adorned, because the Spirit of God where he resides is never barren: There he always brings forth his Fruits, and there also he still bestows his Gifts. By which, Sir, you may sufficiently discover in what Soul the Church resides. If you do not find all this Furniture, never believe blindly that the Church is in those who do not possess these Qualities or Conditions, which are the True Marks of the Church, without which you can never own that she is the True Spouse of God: For these Marks are inseparable from Her; and where you shall not find them, you must immediately desist from believing that you have found the Church: Because there can be nothing but Delusion where they say she is without these Qualities: For she never goes without them. And therefore be not amused, though they say to you, This is the Church here, or there. Do not believe it; no more than if they said to you, *(u) Lo here is Christ, or there; go not out*: For where ever He is, He operates all these Vertues with which you see the Woman in the *Revelation* is adorned.

I said to her, *That if all these Qualities were required in the Spouse of God, I must ingenuously declare, that I do not know the Church: Because I know no Body who has these Qualities of the Woman in the Revelation; and that the Roman Church was directly opposite thereto.*

She said: Sir, So far as you see the Roman Church opposite to them, so far you see her removed from being the Spouse of God, which never goes *(x)* without these Ornaments. She is always true, and these *Romanists* are in many Lyes. They often condemn Saints for Hereticks: And if they knew me, I should be in the same condem-

(u) Matth. 24. 23. (x) Psal. 45. 10, 14, 15.

nation. For they cannot endure the Truth that reproves them ; but they would continue to Rule as the Spouse of God, though they have quitted the Truth, saying ; VVhat they bind and loose, shall be so done in Heaven : Even as if they had continued the Spouse of God, and united to his Will! From which they are far removed : For they have nothing before their Eyes but their own Glory. They are also very far from having the Moon under their Feet: For Honour pleases them ; and they wear it rather on their Head, than tread it under Feet ; and they delight in Pleasures, of which they will not deprive themselves ; as far as they can possess them, they will not put them under their Feet ; no more than Riches, which they carry rather in their Hearts than make them their Footstool. By which you may assuredly judge that the Church of God cannot reside there ; but the Whore, who has falsified her Faith to her Lawful Husband : For while she bears the Name of the Church, she lives in continual Adulteries, which she knows how to cover so well with Things lawful and permitted, that it seems to all who have no good Judgment, that these Whoredoms are Vertues. Must not one have lost his Judgment if he have a Repugnance to quit this Infamous Strumpet, who has for so long time by-gone wallowed in all sort of Filthiness under the colour of Holiness, and of the Spouse of God, without having discovered her Infamies, which would be so manifest to all the VVorld if they had removed that Bandage of blind Obedience which has so closely shut their Eyes ? If you know none, Sir, who has the Qualities of the VVoman in the *Revelation*, you may say in truth that you do not know the Church ; and pray to God that he may let you know Her.

The

The Twenty Eight and Last Conference,

Teaches that all the Lawes, as well that of Nature, as that of Moses, and of the Gospel, are only true Means to attain to a Dependance of our Will upon that of God: That this is the old Leaven which the Woman took and put into three Measures of Meal which are these Three Laws given by God in divers Times, which Jesus Christ compares in his Parable to Three Measures of Meal, and that a Woman now takes this Old Leaven of Dependance upon God to put it into these Three Laws, that it may leaven the whole Lump, and make Bread of it for the Nourishment of Gods Children.

I asked her, *How I should behave my self, since I knew not the Church, which I ought to follow and love?*

She said: Sir, The Gospel is your Mother; because it proceeded from the Wisdom of God, this is what you ought to follow, without seeking for an imaginary Church among Men, The Word of God is the Nourishment of our Soul: The Doctrine of Jesus Christ is the Rule that we must follow to become the Spouse of God. This is the Seed that begets that Spouse. Do not search (y) through the Streets or Corners of the City for your Well-beloved; for you will be beaten by the Souldiers that stand there. Enter into this Closet and Doctrine of the Gospel; and there you will find the Nourishment of your Soul, and the Means of abandoning your self to God to be his

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True Spouse, and his Holy Church, which is the same thing. The Spouse of God is the Church, and the Church is the Spouse of God; and nothing can be it but they who have abandoned their Free-will to the Will of God. Therefore I conjure you never to rye your self to any other Thing: For God still forms his Spouses by (2) his Word. When *Adam* offended, he re-called him by his Word; which being by him heard and followed, he thereby returned into a Dependance upon God. And all the World having shaken off their Dependance upon God, he preserved *Noah* and his Family therein by his Word; which being heard and followed, they were saved from the Waters of the Deluge: And the Children of *Israel* who heard this Word, and followed it, escaped the being drowned in the Red-Sea: And those among the *Jews* who heard the Words of Jesus Christ became his Spouses: Whom we also may imitate: Because the same Word is left us in Writing, and we may become the Church, or Spouse of God, if we will hear and follow it. We need not turn here or there; but rather take the Thing in its Source, and see the Obligation we have of being resigned to God; and having through our Perverseness quitted this SELF-RESIGNATION, the Means of recovering it are marked out in the Gospel, which Jesus Christ has brought us upon Earth. It is this, Sir, that you must follow.

I said to her, *That Jesus Christ in his Gospel had not directly taught this Dependance of our Will upon that of God, as she deduc'd it.*

She said: That Jesus Christ had no other Scope in all his Doctrines but to bring back the Soul of Man into that Dependance upon God, from whence he had turned away; and that if he taught any other Thing it was only to discover to Men the Things they had done, or might do in Time coming, which hindred this Dependance: For otherwise, He would never have taught any other Thing, but that we ought directly to subject our Will to that of God: But seeing He found Men so far from this Dependance; and that they were distracted from it by so many different Means, it was necessary that He should let them see in particular the Things that withdrew them from

(2) 1 Pet. 1. 22.

this Dependance upon God : For they had Lorded it with their own Wills, therefore he tells them, that (a) *they who do not deny themselves cannot be his Disciples*, that no Body might flatter himself in believing he might be saved though he should follow his own Will : And seeing that every one set their Affections upon the perishing Goods of this World, he sayes to them, (b) *Sell all that you have, and follow me* : Because he knew no Body could be resigned to God while their Affections were set on Earthly Things : Because the Love of God is incompatible with the Love of Riches. And seeing that Men had such Natural Affections towards Father and Mother, Silters, or Brethren, or Lands and Houses, he sayes, (c) *He that quits all these things for my Name, shall have a hundred fold and Life everlasting* : To make us understand, that he who should abandon all these things, would be well disposed to resign himself to the Will of God, which Self-resignation would assuredly give him Life Eternal. Thus of all the other Evangelical Counsels. They were taught for no other end but to discover to Man all these Things which might remove him from this **SELF-RESIGNATION**. For if it had not been necessary to make known all these Things in particular by which Man was entirely withdrawn from God ; He himself would not have come upon the Earth ; but would have caused tell by some Prophet in few Words, That to be saved Man must resign his Will to that of God ; as he had often spoke in this manner in past Times by the Mouth of his Prophets. But the Compassion of God was so abundant towards the Misery of Sinners that He resolves to become Man Himself, that he might palpably teach him all he must do and avoid to attain to this **RESIGNATION** of our Will to that of God, which was the only Thing essentially necessary : For all the Commands of God, all the Prophets, and the Doctrine of the Gospel, are no other thing but Voices which cry, *That to be saved we must resign our Will to that of God*, though by accident they teach the particular Means to attain to this *Self-Resignation*. I advise you, Sir, to take up in their plain Literal Sence these Counsels of the Gospel, which

(a) Luke 14. 26. (b) Matth. 19. 21. (c) Matth. 19. 29.

will certainly make you attain to this so much desired Dependance upon God ; for they are given only to serve as most profitable Means to bring us to this End. Remember alwayes that this is the First and Only Commandment that God gave us, and the only End for which we are created : For if we have not resigned our Will to the Will of God, we can never be his Spoules, nor take our delight with him : Because our Self-will does alwayes resist His, and can never enter in a perfect Union, since it only aims at and respects the Earth ; and the Will of God only tends to and aims at Eternal Things. There can never be a Sympathy and Resemblance between Two so distant Objects, as Time and Eternity are. By which you may see, Sir, that all the Doctrine of Jesus, with all the other Laws, have no other Scope, but to make Men return to a Dependance upon God, after they have turned away from it. And though Jesus Christ does not say directly that to be saved we must thus depend upon God ; yet He sayes it indirectly by His Words and Works : since they shew what we must do and avoid to attain to this Dependance, which is the only Essential Commandment.

I said to her, *It was very desirable that all the Men of the World should hear this Lesson, That to be saved we need only resign our Free will to God : That it were good to lay aside all these other Means of Salvation, Precepts and Laws, even that of the Gospel.*

She said : It were very good, Sir, that all the World knew that only Dependance upon God is necessary to Salvation ; that no Body might any longer take the Means for the End : But to lay aside all Laws, and even that of the Gospel, is not at all advisable : Because God did not give them unprofitably ; but as True Means that lead to this Dependance. Make a little Experiment on your self, Sir, to see if you can come to this Dependance without any Means. I fear greatly you should come too short to leap so far all at one Leap. If you do it effectually, in a good time : you have no need of other Things ; but you must take good heed, that you be not deceived : Because we are ordinarily enclined to believe well of our selves. One will sometimes think he is resigned to God when yet he has still some Earthly Affection. For this cause it is better to make a Tryal of it : For you cannot tell if your Affections be set upon your Parents, Friends,
Land.

Land, House, Wealth, if you cannot quit them without Trouble. This would be as a Touchstone if you feel your Heart so disengaged from all these Things, that you can willingly lose them: For in effect, when a Soul is truly resigned unto God, all these Things are a Burthen to it, and become often a Hindrance; and in his Heart he wishes to be delivered from them, if such were the Will of God: But so long as he does not truly feel these Dispositions in the Bottom of his Soul, it were better for him to embrace every one of the Evangelical Counsels, and to force himself to practice them: Not as the End; but as the true Means that lead to the End. If we understood aright the Commandments of God, the First of all is, To love God with all our Heart. This LOVE is that necessary DEPENDANCE, to which we will not submit but by this Love. For to Depend, to Love, and to Adore God, or to be Resigned to Him, is all the same Thing. We can never resign our selves to God, without loving and esteeming Him, and also we cannot love and adore Him without resigning our selves to Him, since He desires it: For we willingly give our selves to Him whom we love and honour. So that the observing the Commandments of God does certainly lead us to this Self-Resignation, as the Counsels of the Gospel do also; for he that denies himself and all that he possesses, must of necessity depend upon God: Because our Heart cannot be without loving something; and if we no longer love any Created Thing, we shall certainly love our Creator, and if we love Him, we shall voluntarily resign our selves unto Him. So that he who observes the Commands of God and the Evangelical Law, is certainly resigned to the Will of God; and he who lives in this Self-Resignation, does assuredly observe the Commandments of God, and the Doctrine of the Gospel, even though he should not Cull them out in particular, and should not fix precisely upon each of them. But the Misery of Men now is, that they neither do the one nor the other. They do not observe the Commandment of loving God with all their Heart, nor yet the Evangelical Counsels. And in the mean time they are all ready to raise Quarrels and Disputes about this Word Dependence, because it is not precisely set down in the Scripture: As if our Salvation depended upon Words and Terms, and not upon the Essence of the Thing, which in it self comprehends

comprehends all the Terms that can signifie it: For when it is said that our Will must be subjected and depend upon that of God, it is as much as if they said, that we must observe the Commandments of God, and also the Counsels of the Gospel: Because both of these consist in the Resignation of our Will to God. But Men are so degenerate in this Age, that they are enclined more to dispute than to discover the Essence of that which is necessary for their Salvation. If this were not the Unhappiness of Men now, no Body would call in question whether Man ought to resign his Will to that of God if he desire to be saved: Because there is nothing more reasonable, nor better, nor more just, than that a Creature resign himself to the Will of its Creatour, and depend upon him from whom it has received All.

I said to her, *That there was no debate to be made about so certain Truths: That every one ought to submit their Judgment to this Dependance upon God, which assuredly was necessary in all Ages and under all Laws.*

She said: Sir, Man has nothing in him that is worthy of God but his Divine Soul, which consists in Reason, and Free-will: And if we do not yield it up to the Will of God, what is it that we can offer or give Him? He has no need of Gold, or Silver or Land, or Flesh, or any Thing that is Natural: Because his Being is wholly Divine. He could not therefore demand any other thing of Man but this Reason and Free-will: As in effect he has not demanded, and will not demand any other thing. When he said in his Commandments, that we must not Kill, nor Steal, and so forth, this was only to draw Man from his Self-love, which led him to all these Things: And when He taught so particularly by the Gospel what we ought to do and avoid, it was because Man followed his own Will in so many divers things: It was needful to point out to him every particular wherein he went astray, and that for this End only, that he might return to this Dependance upon the Will of God: For otherwise, many Things that Man had were not evil in themselves, as Father, Mother, Brother, Sisters, Lands, Houses, Riches; all which Things might be very well posselt, if there were a Dependance of his Will upon that of God. For God did not forbid them by the Ten Commandments; because Men were not then so absolutely Masters of their own Wills

Wills as they became since, for they are not satisfied now to use and follow their own Wills during some Passion of Anger, or Swearing, or the like; but they follow them in all Things, loving Father, Mother, and the rest, out of pure Self-love: For if this were not Self-love, Jesus Christ would draw no Body from it: since he sayes, That we ought to love our Neighbour as our selves: And several other times he exhorts, that we (d) love one another: By which it appears evidently that he would only hinder us from following our Self-will in all these Things: because all sorts of Sins consist in the following our own Wills; as all Vertue consists in resigning our Will to that of God. These are the Two Things which can Save and Damn us: Though they be explained all at length by the Doctrine of the Gospel, yet they are all abridged by *the resigning of our own Will to God; or by the following our own Will.* In this all Good and Evil does consist: Of which we are free to make a Choice, and to follow the one or the other. For there is no Salvation without resigning our Will to God, and no Damnation without following our own Will. Let them grow old in Study, and turn over all the Books of the World, and let them treasure up all the Sciences, they can never find a Truth more clear, than, *That all Vertues and Salvation consist in the Resignation of our Will to that of God; and that, All Sins and Damnation consist in following our own Will.* This is an Eternal Truth which will never change. Every one should lay it to Heart because it concerns him: For it is a general Rule, that respects every one, Rich, Poor, Learned, Ignorant. Let us Work, and Fast, and Pray, and do all that we can; if withal we follow our own Will, assuredly we shall be damned: And on the other hand, Let us take rest, and Eat, and Drink, and do every other thing in a Dependence upon the Will of God, we shall certainly be saved: For God has nothing to do with the Offerings of Metals, but that of our Free-will, which he has reserved for himself: Of which he gave a Figure by the forbidding Adam to eat of One Tree only; Jesus Christ gave us this Conclusion also when after so many Instructions he said, (e) *I came not to do mine own Will, but the Will of him that sent me.* If

(d) John 13. 34. (e) John 6. 38.

Jesus Christ himself, who was the Word of God, lays down his own Will, and says that he came not into this World to follow it, but that of his Father; what then ought to be done and said by the Reasonable Creature who desires to save its Soul, since it is the Will of God that it should be saved? Nevertheless it will not be saved without this Self-RESIGNATION.

I said to her, *That I wish'd from the Bottom of my Soul, that never any Body had taught any other thing but the Dependence that we owe to God; since in truth all is comprehended in it.*

She said: Sir, I hope your Wish shall very shortly be accomplished, because Jesus Christ promised it by a Parable where it is said: (f) *That the Kingdom of Heaven is like to Leaven which a Woman took, and put into Three Measures of Meal till the whole was leavened.* And because now we are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven, God makes us to understand all that he said in former Times by Parables, for then the Time was not come to make these Things be manifestly understood, because the World who then liv'd did not see the Things signified by all these Parables. But at present, we are arrived at the end (g) of the Last Times, and (h) shall see the Things fulfilled which are uttered by Similitudes. He says first, *That the Kingdom of Heaven is like to Leaven*, which a Woman took; as if he had said, The Kingdom of Heaven will be proclaimed by a Woman, who taking the Old, the First and only Essential Commandment OF RESIGNING OUR WILL to that of God, she will put it in the Law of Nature, and in the Written Law, and in the Evangelical Law; which are *the Three Measures of Meal*; and that God sent his Word, these Three several Times, to serve for Bread and Nourishment to our Souls. And it seems this Word, though sent after different ways, has not been converted into Bread; because so few have nourished their Souls by it; and this Food has remained in the Meal even till now. Very few resigned themselves to God, during the Law of Nature; since at the Time of the Deluge, Noah only with his Family were saved, and only (i)

(f) Matth. 13. 33. (g) 1 Cor. 10. 11. (h) Jer. 31. 24.
(i) 1 Pet. 3. 20.

Eight Persons of all the World escaped the Flood. And in the Written Law how few also were abandoned to God? Since *Moses* so suddenly broke (l) the Stone because he saw that few would observe the Commandments which were written in it. And in the Gospel-Law, how few have followed the Word of God? Twelve Apostles: Among whom one forsook it to go hang himself; and some Disciples, among whom divers (m) also abandoned Jesus Christ. So that this Divine Word has served for Nourishment for few Persons. But in the Fulness of Time in which we enter at present, this Divine Word shall have its full (n) effect, and the Holy Spirit (o) shall be poured out upon all Flesh, Young and Old, Great and Small, so that all shall Prophecie, and speak Languages, and do more Wonders (p) than *Moses* did with all the Antient Prophets, who altogether were but (q) Figures of the Things figured which we shall see very shortly come to pass, which will be more perfect than all that the Apostles and their Disciples did, yea even Jesus Christ himself; because we are arrived at the Fulness of Time, of which the Apostles says, (t) *That they shall understand and prophecie in full perfection.* What they only did in part, shall be in Fulness and Accomplishment; because then (u) all Men in general who shall remain on the Earth shall subject their Wills to that of God, who will govern (x) them according to his pleasure and without the contradiction of their own Wills. Then there will be no longer need of (y) Laws, no more Constraint, no more Commands, no more Churches of Stone, no more Sacraments, no more Prayers, no more Desires and Aspirations, because the Souls of all Men shall be filled with the Will of God, and shall have nothing more to ask Him by Prayer, nor have any more need of the Sacraments to obtain his Graces, which are all contained in the Accomplishment of his Will, which will operate in them without having need to go to Church, their Soul being the True Temple where the Will of God

(l) *Exod.* 32. 19. (m) *John* 6. 66. (n) *Isa.* 55. 10, 11.
 (o) *Joel* 2. 28. (p) *Isa.* 35. (q) *1 Cor.* 10. 6. & *2 Cor.*
 3. 7, 11. *Heb.* 10. 1. (r) *1 Cor.* 13. 9. (s) *Joh.* 14. 12.
 (t) *1 Cor.* 13. 10, 12. (u) *Fer.* 31. 3, 4. *Zach.* 13. 8, 9.
 (x) *Isa.* 33. 2. *Zach.* 14. 9. (y) *Fer.* 31. 34. *Rev.* 21. 22.
 resides.

rides, which has no need of Law or Commandment, the Will of God being a Law to it self, by Pure Love, without any constraint. Lo this is the Estate of Blessed Souls who shall enter into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. This (z) is that Hidden Treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven, and he that discovers it ought to sell all that he has to obtain it. It is to be bought very easily. There is no need of being Rich or of Noble Blood: No need of Learning many Languages, nor of passing the Degrees of the Schools and Universities: No need to enter into Cloysters of strict Observance, nor to crush the Body with hard Discipline, Watchings, Fastings and other Bodily Mortifications: No need to learn to Read, Write, or any other Curious Art: Nor yet is there need of perusing so many Spiritual Books with which the World is now full, which Teach so many Methods of Perfection, so many Steps to ascend to Vertue, so many Means to find God. No, Sir, all these Things are not necessary; because there is but ONE THING ONLY so, which is, TO RESIGN OUR WILL TO THE WILL OF GOD. Lo this is *the Leaven that leavens the whole Lump* of the Law of Nature, that of the Jews and that of the Gospel: Because this Subjection of our Will to God comprehends all in it, and gives us an Entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. Lo this is all I have to say to you, and bid you Adieu for ever, Remaining your very Affectionate in a Dependence on the Will of God.

At Macklin Sept. 15.
1667.

ANTHOINETTE BOURIGNON.

(z) *Matth. 13. 44.*

Luke xxj. 5. *I will give you a Mouth and Wisdom which they who shall rise up against you shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.*

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